

BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

+

RAJSHAHÍ.



[Price—In India, Rs. 3 ; In England, 4s. 6d.]

नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

RAJSHAHI

BY

L. S. S. O'MALLEY,

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE.



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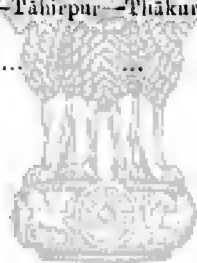
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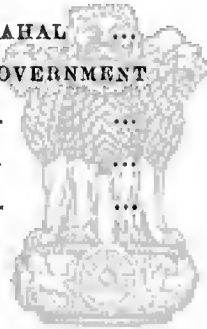
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सत्यमेव जयते

GAZETTEER

OF THE

RAJSHAHI DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

RAJSHAHI is a district in the south-west of the Rājshāhi division. It lies between the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth parallels of north latitude, while its limits east and west lie between the eighty-eighth and eighty-ninth degrees of east longitude. Its area is 2,618 square miles, and it contains a population, according to the census of 1911, of 1,480,587 persons. The headquarters are at Rāmpur Boālia, a town on the northern bank of the Ganges, which in this portion of its course is known as the Padma. The postal and telegraphic designation of the town is, however, not Rāmpur Boālia but Rājshāhi, and it is not infrequently referred to by the inhabitants as Rājshāhi. The correct transliteration according to Bengali spelling is Rājsāhi.

GENERAL
DESCRIP-
TION.

The name Rājshāhi is commonly believed to mean the royal territory, and it is a popular, but mistaken, idea that the district was given this designation because it is the home of many Rājas. The origin of the name is doubtful, but one plausible hypothesis is that it dates back to the beginning of the fifteenth century A. D., when this part of the country was ruled over by Rāja Kans or Ganesh, the Hindu chief of Bhāturia (*i.e.*, the country on both sides of the river Atrai in Dinājpur and Rājshāhi). The Rāja, having ousted the Muhammadan Governor of Gaur, became king of Bengal, and, according to Professor Blochmann, was consequently known as a Rāja-Shāh, *i.e.*, a Hindu Rāja who ascended a Musalmān throne, while his territory acquired the name of Rājshāhi.

Derivation
of name.

"I have no doubt," he wrote, "that the name of the district of Rājshāhi is connected with Rāja Kans; for just as Mahmūd-shāhi, Barbakshāhi and other names in the neighbourhood

of Rājshāhi refer to the Bengal kings Māhmud Shāh and Barbak Shāh, so can Rājshāhi, *i.e.*, Rājashāhi, only refer to the Rāja who was the Shāh, *i.e.*, to a Hindu Rāja who ascended a Musalmān throne. In its shortened form, Rājshāhi is certainly a most extraordinary hybrid; for the Hindi *rāj* is the same as the Persian *shāhi*.”*

It may be mentioned here that in the old district records of the eighteenth century there are several spellings from which it might perhaps be argued that the pronunciation of Rājshāhi was once recognised, *e.g.*, Rajishy, Rajishaye, Rajishahye and Rajeshy. Those curious in such things may be interested in the following list of other spellings which were used more or less indiscriminately in the early days of Bri-

tration: (1) Rajeshy, Rajeshey, Rajeshahy, *rajesnaye*. (2) Radshy, Radshi, Radshahy, Radshye, Radshay, Radshaye, Radshahye, Raudshehi, (3) Rajishy, Rajeshahy, Rajshahy, (4) Raajshahy, Raajshiey and (5) Rajshahy and Rajshy.

Bound-
aries.

The Gauges forms a natural boundary to the south and south-west. This great river separates Rājshāhi from the districts of Nadia and Murshidābād. The other contiguous districts are:—Dinājpur and Bogra on the north, Bogra and Pābna on the east and Mālda on the west.

Natural
divisions.

Except on the north and west, the district presents the usual appearance of a recent alluvial formation, being a uniform alluvial plain, the surface of which is seamed with old river beds and broken, here and there, by wide marshes (*bils*). While this is the general aspect, three different divisions can be distinguished.

Barind.

The first forms part of the country called Varendra in Sanskrit literature, and the Barind in modern Bengali. This is a tract of comparatively high land, which includes portions of the Mālda, Rājshāhi, Dinājpur, Rangpur and Bogra districts in the Rājshāhi Division. A stiff soil of reddish clayey loam distinguishes it from the remainder of those districts, the soil of which is sandy alluvium of recent formation. In its general direction this belt of land runs east and west, comprising Western Bogra, South-Western Rangpur, Southern Dinājpur, and Northern Rājshāhi, but on the west it takes a turn southward, and extends almost to the Ganges, from Godāgāri to Premtali in this district, embracing the eastern portion of Mālda and part of Western Rājshāhi.

* History and Geography of Bengal, J. A. S. B. 1876, p. 287.

The Barind in Rājshāhi, starting from near Godāgāri, stretches northwards along the western boundary and then bending to the east stretches along the whole of the north of the district. It thus borders on Mālda, Dinājpur and Bogra and comprises portions of all the three subdivisions of Rājshāhi, viz., the whole of Godāgāri thana* and the greater part of Tānor in the Sadar subdivision, the major portion of Mānda and Māhādebpur in the Naogaon subdivision, and the north of Singra including Nandigrām, in the Nātor subdivision. It is a slightly elevated tract, but it must not be supposed that there is any great difference of level between it and the rest of the district. It is undulating, but there are also large level plains and the slopes are gentle and gradual, admirably adapted for rice cultivation. Winter rice is, in fact, the only crop grown. Field does not press upon field, however, as in other parts of the district. The fields are large and there are many waste places with a thin low scrub. Large trees, which may be the survivors of a distant past when the country was well wooded, are scattered about. In some parts palm trees are found in great numbers, either singly or in clumps, and furnish a characteristic scenery. The whole country is drier than the alluvial flats. The soil is harder and less friable; it has not the same dull grey hue, but is in places yellowish to red. The people are not all Bengalis, for there are many settlements of Bihāris and Santāls. The Barind, moreover, with its gentle slopes, affords wide prospects which cannot be seen on the alluvial plain, where there are no such spreading landscapes; in places it resembles parts of Midnapur and Bānkura on the fringe of the Chota Nāgpur Plateau. It is cut up to some extent by small streams or nullahs deep cut in the ground, which are known locally as *khāris*. It contains a sparse population, who subsist by the cultivation of rice.

The second region is a riparian tract along the Ganges, which forms the thanas of Rāmpur Boālia, Chārchāt and Lālpur. It has a grey sandy soil, on which a variety of crops are grown. The level is relatively high, the land sloping down northward from the Ganges. The population is fairly dense and includes a considerable number of landless labourers, who were originally attracted by the silk industry, besides some

* The term thana throughout the Gazetteer means the revenue unit and not the police-station established for investigating purposes, which is frequently smaller than the thana proper.

Muhammadan settlers from Dacca and Farīdpur, who are found along the river bank.

The *bil*
area.

The third area which comprises the thanas of Naogāon, Bāgmāra, Puthia, Pānchupur, Nātor, Baraigrām and the southern part of Singra is also well defined. It is a swampy waterlogged depression, abounding in *bils* and traversed by several rivers. The soil is a black loam, and is most fertile; but malaria is very prevalent, especially during the rains and early winter months, and the death-rate is high. The population, however, is dense except in Singra, which contains part of the Chalan Bil. This tract may be again subdivided into areas growing and not growing *gānja*. The former, which is included in the Naogāon thana, has a somewhat higher surface, and the drainage is less obstructed than elsewhere in this group of thanas.

Scenery.

Like the other deltaic districts of Bengal, the greater part of Rājshāhi consists of broad expanses of low-lying rice-ground, studded with villages and hamlets embedded in groves of trees. The thickets of jungle, groups of palms, clusters of delicate bamboos, and the green verdure of leafy lanes have a quiet beauty of their own. The only exception to the prevailing monotony of scenery is found in the Barind, which consists of a stiff red clay (called *khiyar*) with an undulating surface. It is distinctly picturesque in some places *e.g.*, at Khetur, from which a fine landscape of wooded rolling country may be seen.

Marshes or
bils.

One of the principal features in the configuration of the district is an abundance of low-lying depressions, which frequently form marshes or swamps (*bils*). Travelling from west to east, they increase in number and size, till, in the extreme east, the whole boundary of the district is covered by a series of marshes. Many dry up in the hot weather, but during the rains expand into broad but shallow sheets of water, which may be best described as freshwater lagoons. Their appearance, however, varies greatly, for while some are clear and deep sheets of water, others are shallow swamps filled with grass and reeds growing so thickly as to be almost intermatted. Others again, so far from being unproductive wastes, are the most uniformly fertile rice lands. At the time of harvest they present an extraordinary sight, for the rice grows, matures and very often is harvested in water. In the deeper *bils* nothing is to be seen but water, often, however, dotted with islands or enclosed by high land, on which are villages and tree growth. Many of the villages are completely

isolated during the rains, when the only means of reaching them is by boat. At this time of the year it is a curious sight to see boats large and small making their way across country through lanes in the green fields of tall rice that cover the water surface. It will readily be understood that these *bils* form a serious obstacle to transport by land, for roads can only be constructed across them at great expense. They would have to run on high embankments, and these again would have to be strong enough to withstand the pressure of water, which may be as much as ten feet in depth.

It is probable that the formation of these *bils* is not due to one and the same cause. In some cases a string of them is found along a line of drainage, which suggests that they represent the remains of some great river which centuries ago deserted its channel and sought its course elsewhere. Such a string of *bils* may be seen stretching southward from the Mānda Bil to near Nahāta. In other cases they are merely due to the action of the rivers, which by centuries of silt deposit have raised their beds and marginal banks so high that they flow above the level of the surrounding country. The country between a pair of parallel rivers thus forms a kind of trough, the drainage of which cannot be discharged into the rivers. The rivers again, which would have filled the *bils* by the overflow of their silt-laden waters, cannot do so because they are locked within their channels by high silt-formed banks.

The *bil* of widest repute is the Chalan Bil, which is the name applied to a low-lying marshy tract extending over about 140 square miles on the borders of the Rājshāhi and Pābna districts. It lies between Singra (a police-station in the Nātor subdivision) and the north bank of the Gumāni; the latter is the name given to the lower reaches of the old channel of the Atrai, which are now fed by the waters of the Nandakuja. The south-eastern extremity of the *bil* is at Astamani-sha in Pābna, close to Nunnagar, where the Gumāni and the Baral meet. Its northern limit in this district may be represented by a line drawn east from Singra to the Bhadai river, which divides Rājshāhi from the districts of Pābna and Bogra. Its eastern boundary may be represented by a line drawn from north to south in Pābna and running through the village of Tārās east of the Bhadai. Its greatest breadth is about nine miles from Tārās on the north-east to Nārāyanpur one mile from Biyāghāt, a village on the north bank of the Gumāni.

Its greatest length is about 15 miles from Singra to Kāchikāta on the Gumāni.

The principal feeder of the Chalan Bil is the Atrai or Gur, the latter being the name of the channel by which the water of the Atrai now comes down. It flows past Singra, Kalam (below which it flows through the channel called Padhoyār Jola), Ekānnabigha, Jogendranagar, Dikdaria and Khubjipur, and conveys into the *bil* the waters it drains from the north in its passage through the districts of Dinājpur and Rājshāhi. The southern base is skirted by the Gumāni, by which the *bil* water is carried off into the Baral and eventually finds its way into the Brahmaputra. During the rains the Gumāni overflows its banks and pours masses of water into the *bil*. This river meets the Gur to the south-east of Bahādurpur and forms a broad sheet of open water, 4 to 6 miles in width, which is known locally as the Failām, meaning broad. Later in the year, *viz.*, from December to June, the Failām dries up, but is not cultivated, as crops would be swept away by the force of water during the rains.

The *bil* is a depressed basin, sunk on all sides below the level of the adjacent country except at the south-eastern extremity where its waters escape into the Baral through the Gumāni. When the Brahmaputra is in flood, the current of the Baral is held back, and the water of the *bil* remains pent up until the Brahmaputra falls again. During the dry season the greater portion of the *bil* dries up leaving a water basin of about 15 square miles, which extends from Tājpur and Daiya on the north to a line drawn east and west through Khubjipur. It is three to four miles in breadth from Bālsa in the east, the western boundary being the land that the Atrai has built up on its eastern bank where it passes by Jogendranagar to the south-east of Sāpgāri and Durgapur. This area may be called the water basin or core of the *bil*. The 'core' area is not, however, covered with an uninterrupted expanse of water, but is a collection of shallow sheets of water connected with each other by tortuous channels and interspersed with patches of high ground, on some of which stand villages. The water basin under description is traversed north to south by an exceedingly sinuous stream called the Bānganga, which is not a river strictly so called but a mere channel in the *bil*. The depth of this as well as of the network of subsidiary channels that communicate with it is from 6 to 12 feet. Even during the rains, when there is water 10 to 12 feet deep all over the water basin, no central open sheet of water is visible on

account of a thick growth of tall grass and other aquatic plants (the playground of schools of porpoises), there being no strong currents here to sweep away the vegetation as in the Failām.

Round the "core" there are two concentric irregular shaped oval areas growing rice of the long-stemmed variety; both dry up entirely between December and June, when they are cultivated. The first "ring," which is rather narrow towards the south-west, is covered with 7 to 8 feet of water during the rains. The outer "ring" includes the rest of the Chalan tract bulging out toward the north and north-east; though flooded in the rains, the depth of water is much less than elsewhere, and conditions approximate to those prevailing in the southern part of Dacca and Farīdpur during the annual flood season.

Since the old Atrai has ceased to be an active channel and a part of its bed has been occupied by the Musakhān or Gadai, which finds an outlet into the Gur at Sāonail, there has been an incursion of the silt-laden Padma water into the *bil*, which has caused a rapid silting up in the parts close to the channel of the Atrai. The same operation of land building is noticeable at some distance from the south-western margin of the *bil*, where the old Atrai, owing to the annual deposit of silt during the rains, has succeeded in building up banks of some considerable width, which are not overtopped by the highest flood water. The water area of the *bil*, though once extending so far south as the banks of the Baral, has now receded from the portion south of the present course of the Gumāni, resulting in the conversion of many thousands of acres into fertile land. The *bil* still abounds in fish and water fowl; the value of the annual export of fish alone is estimated at Rs. 60,000, the centre of the trade being Kalam, while fowlers come from Bihar and elsewhere to net wild duck and teal, which they despatch to Calcutta. River-water shells containing cheap inferior pearls are also found in its waters.

It has been suggested by Mr. N. Sen, Subdivisional Officer of Nātor, that the Chalan Bil may mark the site of a former confluence of the Atrai and Karatoya. At Handiāl in Pābna near the south-eastern extremity of the *bil* there is a moribund river-bed bearing the name of Karatoya, a fact which may be said to favour this view. Local tradition says that Handiāl used to be a large commercial town on the banks of a broad flowing river, three or four centuries ago, and that the Gumāni used to flow much further to the south. Handiāl was, in fact, a large riverside mart, with a commercial residency of

the East India Company, in the latter part of the eighteenth century and frequently appears in the old district records under the name of Hurriaul. It is, in Mr. Sen's opinion, possible that this Karatoya once formed part of the great Karatoya, which was formerly a channel of the Tista.

In conclusion, it may be stated that though during the rains the entire area of the *bil* is covered with water of varying depth, the surface of which is broken only by the high lands of the villages situated in it, it would be a mistake to expect any scenery like that of a large open lake, as large portions are covered with tall rice and other vegetation.*

The Chalan Bil is said to have extended formerly over as much as 421 square miles, but nearly the whole of this large area has now become dry land resembling very closely in appearance the fen country in Cambridgeshire. In 1909, a temporary subdivision of the Public Works Departments (called the Chalan Bil subdivision) was created for the investigation of the question of its drainage. An enquiry was held extending from the middle of February to the end of September, and it was found that its area had been reduced to 142 square miles, the remainder having been reclaimed. Even in this reduced area, only 33 square miles were under water all the year round. The rest was under water for part of the year, but was rising in level every year with the deposition of silt; 49 square miles were low land which could only be cultivated during February, March and April, while 22 square miles were raised land which was cultivable for dry crops from January or February and 38 square miles were cultivable from November. It was then calculated that 222½ million cubic feet of silt a year were brought in by the feeder rivers, while 53 million cubic feet were carried off by the rivers draining the *bil*. The balance of 169½ million cubic feet was deposited annually: this deposit, if distributed equally over the whole 142 square miles, means a raising of the level at the rate of half an inch a year.

In May 1910 a further enquiry was held in order to ascertain the condition of the *bil* during the dry weather. It was found that the area of the *bil* proper had been further reduced and that it extended from Bairabāri on the north-west to midway between Kālinagar and Ekānnabigha on the south

* I am indebted to Mr. N. Sen, Subdivisional Officer of Nātor, for this account of the Chalan Bil.

and to Khubjipur on the south-east. The portion to the west of Bairabāri was dry and under cultivation, while the depth of water in the *bil* itself was only 1 foot.

In 1913 a further inspection was made with the result that it was ascertained that only 12 to 15 square miles remained under water throughout the year (compared with 33 square miles in 1909), the banks all round being high and under cultivation, while the depth of water in the *bil* in the month of April varied from 9 inches to 18 inches. It is thus apparent that the Chalan Bil is silting up rapidly. Land is being reclaimed, new villages are springing up along its sides, and the watery waste is yielding place to settled tilth.

The district slopes slightly from west to east, and its drainage is carried off not by the rivers but through the marshes. The Chalan Bil is the basin into which the drainage of the eastern portion of the district converges. Into it the overflow from other low-lying areas gradually finds its way, to be passed on eventually, through an outlet at its south-eastern corner, into the Brahmaputra. The Ganges itself is not a drainage channel, for its bank is higher than the general level of the country, and the drainage consequently sets away from it.

With the exception of three rivers, viz., the Ganges, which forms the southern boundary of Rājshāhi, the Mahānanda, which runs for a short distance along its western border, and the Atrai, which traverses the district from north-west to south-east, the rivers are of little hydrographic importance, and most are more or less moribund. In other words, they are not active flowing streams except during the rains, when they serve as drainage channels carrying off a large volume of water and have a considerable current. Most are narrow and flow in well-defined channels. The following is a brief account of the principal rivers:—

The Ganges, which in this portion of its course is known as the Padma, flows along the whole of the district to the south for a distance of 65 miles. It first impinges on Rājshāhi at the point of its confluence with the Mahānanda and flows past Godāgāri and, about sixteen miles further on, the town of Rāmpur Boālia. It continues in a south-easterly direction to Sardah and then takes a sweep to the south, leaving the district a few miles below Lālpur.

Except for the Mahānanda, it has no important tributaries in Rājshāhi, and there is only one large offshoot, viz., the Baral, which takes off at Chārchāt, a mile south of Sardah. On

LINES OF
DRAINAGE.

RIVER
SYSTEM.

Ganges or
Padma.

the right bank, however; there are two great distributaries, the Jalangi, which takes off to the south-east of Sardah, and the Matabhānga, which branches off about 10 miles further down.

The fall of the Ganges is about nine inches per mile, and the current varies from about three miles an hour in the cold weather to at least double that rate during the rains. In particular spots, as, for instance, where the stream rushes round some projecting point, this rate of motion is exceeded, and boats and steamers find great difficulty in making their way against the current. According to the gauge readings at Rāmpur Boālia, the lowest water level on record was 37·63 feet on 25th April 1884 and the highest was 69·25 feet on 26th August 1879: the zero of the gauge is 42 feet, and the greatest height over zero in the last 10 years was 26·30 feet. The rise of water in the main channel between the end of April and the end of August is generally about 20 feet.

Every year the Ganges is forming and cutting away land along its course by a constant alternation of alluvion and diluvion. During the rainy season, the current impinges with immense weight upon banks composed of loose soil, which are rapidly undermined. An acre of ground has been known to have been swept away in half an hour. Large islands also form in the channel, some of them many miles in length. In a year, perhaps, they become covered with grass and tamarisk jungle as high as an elephant. Captain Sherwill states that he has seen such islands "become inhabited, cleared and cultivated; the population increases, large villages start up; the land revenue is collected for ten or twelve years; and then the whole fabric will disappear within one rainy season."

For many miles below the junction of the Mahānanda the bank of the Padma consists of a stiffish clay soil, which yields very little to the action of water, but from a few miles to the north-west of Rāmpur Boālia the soil is sandy, friable and easily washed away. There used to be serious inundation in this town owing to the over-spill of its water, and about fifty years ago a considerable portion of the civil station was washed away. An embankment has been built to protect the town against inundation.

The name Padma is given to the main stream of the Ganges in the lower part of its course between the offtake of the Bhagirathi in the Murshidabad district and the south-eastern corner of the Dacca district, where it joins the Meghna. Until about 400 years ago the main volume of the Ganges poured down the

Bhāgirathi ; but by degrees this channel silted up and became unequal to its task, and the main stream of the Ganges was thus obliged to find another outlet. In this way the Jalangi, the Mātābhānga and the Garai became in turn the main stream. The river tended ever to the east ; and at last, aided perhaps by a subsidence of the unstable surface of the country it broke eastward across the old drainage channels until it was met and stopped by the Prahmaputra. The present course of the Padma is therefore of comparatively recent origin.

There is a small stream called the Padma which flows into the Ganges from the Barind in the vicinity of Godāgāri. It is probable that the Ganges appropriated the name, as well as the channel of this stream, when it broke away to the south-east instead of pouring the main volume of its water down the Bhāgirathi. Another local tradition which may bear on the hydrography of the Padma is that the Mahāuanda formerly flowed past Rāmpur Boālia. The point of junction of these two great rivers even now shifts from place to place, and at present they meet about 20 miles from Rāmpur Boālia.

The great geographer Rennell in his *Account of the Ganges and Burrampooter Rivers* (Philosophical Transactions, 1781) propounded another theory about the old course of the Ganges. "Appearances favour very strongly the opinion that the Ganges had its former bed in the tract now occupied by the lakes and morasses between Nattore and Jaffiergunge,* striking out of the present course at Pauleah and passing by Pootya. With an equal degree of probability we may trace its supposed course by Dacca to a junction with the Burrampooter or Megna near Fringybazār, when the accumulation of two such mighty streams probably scooped out the present amazing bed of the Megna."

If this theory is accepted, the old course of the Ganges lay along the Nārad (which branches off 8 miles east of Rāmpur Boālia and flows past Puthia and Nātor) and then along the Baral, which flows into the Pābna district, but the channel of the Nārad which is now silted up is so small that this theory scarcely seems tenable. From its present appearance, indeed, it seems impossible that it can ever have been anything but a small river.

In this portion of its course the Ganges is not a sacred river. Religious feeling being intensely conservative, sanctity attaches only to its old channel and not to the comparatively

* Jafarganj in the Dacca district not far from the borders of Pābna.

modern course of the Padma. While therefore the Hindus revere the Bhāgirathi, which used to be its main channel, the water of the Padma is no more sacred than that of the Hooghly south of Calcutta, which is another modern outlet. Though not a sacred river, the Padma has all the attributes of grandeur and utility which have conferred sanctity on the upper channel. In the words of Sir William Hunter "it rolls majestically down to the sea in a bountiful stream, which never becomes a merely destructive torrent in the rains and never dwindles away in the hottest summer." The truth of the description will be realized by those who have seen the noble sweep of this great river at Sardah. From bank to bank it is never less than a mile and is usually much more. It is generally, however, split up into channels flowing between sandbanks, islands and alluvial accretions generically known as *chars* or *diāras*.

*Chars or
diāras.*

These *chars* are the outcome of the shifting nature of its course. Every year great changes take place in the river bed, which are a constant difficulty to those who have to navigate the river steamers. Extensive islands are thrown up, or land forms as an accretion to the banks on either side or to islands in the river bed. The *chars* were formerly cultivated with indigo, but are now given up to country crops and are a favourite haunt of wild pig. These *chars* are for the most part the property of Government, but some are resumed estates. A list of the *char* estates will be found in Chapter XII, and here it will suffice to say that the principal are Asariadaha and Nausera opposite Godāgāri, Srirāmpur, Nabinagar and Titānāri off Rāmpur Boalia and Diār Sibnagar opposite Sardah. Altogether, they form a long but broken chain from Godāgāri to the south-eastern extremity of the district.

Half a century ago the *chars* were covered with thick jungle, of which the following description (written by Mr. H. Torrens, I.C.S., about 1850) is given in Simson's *Sport in Eastern Bengal* (1886):—"The jungles are long strips of thick reedy cover lying in hollows about water and scattered about an immense extent of alluvial plain-lands, the cleared portions of which grow indigo, which have formed at the confluence of the Ganges and Jellinghee rivers. It is called in the local dialect a *dher* (sic), and being covered with water in the rains, is in drier seasons not unhandsomely covered with *pank* or *phassin* as they call it up-country, that treacherous amalgam of bog, morass and quicksand which is none of them and yet beats them each and all in abomination. The open ground between these covers, across new sown indigo lands, afforded excellent

riding ; but there was no want of variety. Virgin jungles, self-sown on the new alluvial lands called *churs*, afforded to the curious inequitation every obstacle combined that could tempt a man, even with game afoot, to hold hard ; now miles of thick-set cane-like reeds, semi-impervious to appearance, rising above the head of a mounted man and covering an expanse where every eddy and counter current of the tumultuous waters that formed it had left its individual foss and hollow in the new indurated sand ; or else ragged scrubby brakes of ill-conditioned attempts at low trees which, being unable to stretch their heads as high as they would like, stretch their meagre arms abroad, or else grass so thick that the boar before you is only traceable by the wake his rushing progress leaves of shaking stems ; this grass grows on lumpy uneven soil where the subterranean labours of Sir Rat have favoured its spreading roots. And yet again there is a variety which deserves notice in the above jungle, and that is when, growing in thick tufts, it has forced up tussocks or little hummocks of earth from a foot to 18 inches high ; these lie close together and, when the jungle has been partially burned, offer alternately the bush of half-scorched reeds or the stumps of those fully consumed, hardened with fire and sticking out from the earth like a vegetable hedge-hog." Not all the *chars* were like this, but covered more or less thickly with dry *benna* grass, with no cultivation or open ground, but with a hard soil full of ruts, stumps and cracks.

Those who have ridden pig in the *chars* will realise that this account still largely holds good. The greater part has been cleared for cultivation, but tamarisk jungle still grows so thick and high that it comes up to the shoulder of the rider. His stirrup leathers may be torn away as he gallops through it, and he may have to guide his horse through a nightmare of broken country thick with fissures, or have to get across water with a thick viscous bottom, from which his horse shrinks and which even an elephant dislikes.

The Mahānanda is one of the great rivers of North Bengal. It takes its rise in the Himalayan range, and, flowing through the districts of Purnea and Mālda, touches the western border of Rājshāhi a short distance above Sultānganj. It marks the boundary line between this district and Mālda for a few miles and empties itself into the Ganges a few miles above Godāgāri. It is a wide and deep river, easily navigable by large cargo-boats. During the few miles it touches on Rājshāhi, it neither receives any tributaries nor throws off any offshoots.

Mahā-
nanda.

Atra and
Gur.

The Atrai, which is another of the great rivers of North Bengal, enters the district eight miles north of Mahādebpur police-station and flows due south to Mahādebpur and Mānda. Then it bends to the south-east and traverses the Naogāon and Nātor subdivisions for a distance of about 70 miles, giving its name to a railway station (Atrai) situated on its bank. Close to the Atrai railway station it bifurcates. The northern branch, which is called the Gur and is now the main channel, flows past Singra, after leaving which it passes through the Chalan Bil and is largely used for traffic from the south-east. It is joined near Singra by the Nagar, a stream which flows south-westward from the Bogra district passing Karachmaria and Kāliganj. The southern branch, which is called the Mara Atrai, or dead Atrai, is joined by the Bārālai at Kāliganj; and at Chandraipur (north of Hālsa) the Nandakuja pours its water into its channel, which is henceforth called the Guināni. The Gur, or main channel of the Atrai, debouches into it near Bahādurpur, and the united stream then passes into the Pābna district, where it joins its waters with those of the Baral.

The Atrai was formerly one of the great rivers of North Bengal, for it was the main channel by which the waters of the Tista discharged into the Ganges. In 1787, however, the Tista broke away from its ancient bed and cut for itself a new and capacious channel by which it found its way into the Brahmaputra. Since then the Atrai has lost its former importance, but it is still navigable by large country boats.

The Atrai is identifiable with the Atrai, one of the sacred rivers of the *Mahābhārata*, and bathing in the old channel on certain holy days is believed to confer as much merit as bathing in the Ganges itself. In some places in its upper reaches the river is fordable during the dry season, and the cargoes of large boats have to be taken across the fords in small boats. The water is very clear and transparent except during the rains; it is highly esteemed as a pure drinking water, while the fish of the Atrai have a reputation for good flavour.

Jamuna.

The Jamuna or Jabuna is the principal tributary of the Atrai within the district. It flows northward from the Bogra district, passes by the town of Naogāon and joins the Atrai at Suktigāchha after a total length of 89 miles. Near the village of Etākata, it is joined by a moribund river called the Tulsiganga, which also flows southwards from Bogra almost parallel to the Jamuna: it is only a mile to the west of the Jamuna at Naogāon, where the road from Sāntahār passes over it. The Jamuna is believed to be, like the Atrai, an old channel of the

Tīsta. In this portion of its course it can be navigated by boats of considerable burden.

The Baral is the most important offshoot of the Ganges in Rājshāhi. It leaves the parent stream near the police-station of Chārghāt, and flows eastwards through the southern portion of the district till it passes into Pābna. The Baral is a large stream, and was formerly navigable at all seasons of the year; but a sandbank has formed across its mouth, obstructing the free passage of water from the Ganges. This river throws out two offshoots to the north—the Musakhān and the Nandakuja, which take off the water of the Baral northwards into the *bils*. The result is that in the Baraigrām thana the Baral itself is only a series of pools in the cold weather and a comparatively insignificant stream even in the rains. In fact, the Nandakuja now forms the main channel of the Baral.

Both the Nandakuja and Musakhān were originally small streams which have been artificially improved. The mouth of the latter was cleared about a century ago, and of the former considerably later, by the proprietors of an indigo factory. The intake in both cases was widened and deepened until the stream was able to make a capacious channel for itself. Now these rivers carry the Ganges water 30 miles inland, and a great deal of *bil* land has been raised by the deposit of silt.

Nanda-
kuja and
Gumāni.

The Nandakuja leaves the Baral at the village of Nandikuja, the site of a former indigo factory to the east of Dayārāmpur, and flowing in a north-easterly direction takes possession, at Chandrapur, of the bed of the old southern branch of the Atrai, which is henceforth called the Gumāni. It continues in a north-easterly direction past Nāzirpur, Fiyāghāt and Gurudāspur, and joining the Gur at Lahādurpār flows past Kāchikatā into the Pābna district, where the present stream, the Baral, rejoins it at Nunnagar.

The Musakhān, which is also known as the Gadai, branches off from the Baral at Jāmnāgra and flows past Jhalmalia on the Nātor-Rāmpur Boālia road, where it is spanned by a large bridge. It then crosses into the Nātor subdivision, where it assumes the name of Gadai, and flowing by the north of the town of Nātor falls into the Gur at Sāonāil.

Musakhān
or Gadai.

The Pāralai rises in a *bil* in the Mānda thana of the Naogāon subdivision and flows south to Nahāta. It then flows eastwards through the Nahāta and Fāgmāra thanas into the Nātor subdivision, where it eventually makes its way into the Chalan Bil after joining the old channel of the Atrai at

Baralai.

Kāliganj. It is navigable all the year round and is an important waterway, carrying a large export of paddy, vegetables and *pān* from the Barind. At Bāgmāra there is a channel called the Fakīrni, which connects it with the Atrai.

Nārad.

The Nārad is an offshoot of the Musakhān, which flows through the town of Nātor. It is a dead river, its offtake (at Pāikpāra a mile below the Jhalmalia bridge) being now several feet higher than the level of the Musakhān. Its channel is now dry land or a mere succession of pools, except to the east of Nātor, where it is navigable during the rains. East of Nātor it is joined by another stream, also called the Nārad, which runs from south to north. From the point of confluence, the united Nārad continues to flow eastwards till it falls into the old channel of the Atrai just above the junction of that river with the Nandakuja. The Nārad was originally an offshoot of the Padma, the offtake being near Shāhpur, but the channel as far as Pāikpāra, where it is bisected by the Muskhān though shown on the map, has silted up, and it is no longer recognizable as a river.

GEOLOGY.

The greater part of the district is covered with recent alluvium, consisting of sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers, and elsewhere of fine silt consolidating into clay. The Barind, however, belongs to an older alluvial formation; it is composed of massive argillaceous beds of a rather pale reddish brown hue, often weathering yellowish, in which are disseminated pisolitic ferruginous concretions.

BOTANY.

Where the ground is not occupied with the usual crops of North Bengal, it is covered with an abundant natural vegetation. Old river-beds, ponds and marshes, and streams with a sluggish current have a copious vegetation of *Vallisneria* and other plants. Land subject to inundation has usually a covering of *Tamarix* and reedy grasses. Few trees are found on these inundated lands; the commonest is the *hijal* (*Barringtonia acutangula*). There are no forests; even on the higher ground groups of large trees are few, and the surface is covered by bamboos and grasses, such as *Imperata arundinacea* and *Andropogon aciculatus*. Magnificent specimens of the banyan, *pipal* and red cotton tree (*semul*) may, however, be seen. Some of the banyans fully answer to Milton's description of the fig-tree, which "In Malabar or Deccan spreads her arms, branching so broad and long, that in the ground the bended twigs take root, and daughters grow about the mother tree, a pillared shade." In some parts of the district the mango crop is almost as important as in Mālda, and boats come up from

Dacca and other parts of Eastern Pengal to take away cargoes of this luscious fruit. The villages are generally buried in thickets of bamboo and tree growth. Palms are numerous in the Barind, and in the south of the district there are many *khejur* or date palm trees, besides numerous specimens of the *bābul* (*Acacia arabica*) or gum arabic tree with its sweet-scented yellow flower. One noticeable feature of the tree growth is the presence of tall casuarina trees round the ruins of indigo and silk factories scattered over the district, which owe their origin to the planters.

The district was formerly well stocked with game, and good FAUNA. sport was obtained, as will be seen from *Sport in Eastern Bengal* by F. B. Simson (1886): Mr. Simson was a member of the Indian Civil Service, whose first station (in 1850) was Rājshāhi. The *chars* in those days were under jungle, with the exception of some clearings where indigo was sown: the rest of the *char* land was covered with thick reeds, rushes and tamarisk bushes, and in some places the jungle was so heavy that it could only be beaten with the help of a line of elephants. The *char* then sheltered wild buffaloes, which were generally ridden down and shot from the saddle at close quarters with a gun or horse pistol. The last buffalo seen on the *chars* was shot in this way on Jajira Char Sonaikandi in the late "sixties" by Mr. Harry Deverell, Manager of Watson and Company.

The Barind was also a good hunting ground, in which tiger could be got. "Here," wrote Mr. Simson, "were large tracts of tree jungle, with palms, bamboos and all the common Bengal trees: at the foot of these trees shrubby, thorny jungle afforded the best of cover for all game. The Burrin was so unlimited, so hard to beat, so difficult to shoot in, and considered so unsatisfactory, that sportsmen seldom looked it up; nevertheless it was here that most of the game found breeding shelter, and from the Burrin the deer and the hogs descended to the villages to find shelter in the grass and rose-bushes and to revel in the green crops; and when hard pressed by beating elephants, all the game would make for the Burrin. Here, between the water and the Burrin, was ample space to ride hog and deer*; tigers and leopards followed the deer and hog to the valley; black partridges and hog-deer swarmed in the thatching grass;

* Simson used to ride after hog-deer, but in spite of relays of riders, never managed to spear one.

khyah partridges, called 'Chickore,' abounded in the rose-bushes; snipe and nearly every kind of Bengal wild duck resorted to the water in the centre. The only game which stuck steadily to the Burrin, so far as I could ascertain, consisted of spotted deer, which I never shot elsewhere in Bengal, and peafowl. It was in this delightful hunting-place that I saw a tiger for the first time." Mr. Simson was then at Abhayā, an old indigo factory on the Mahānanda, close to which was the valley he spoke of with water in the centre extending for miles. His entry for the day in his diary was 'Four deer, nine brace of partridges, two couple of snipe, two wild ducks, wounded a tiger.'

Half a century ago, therefore, the district contained buffalo, tiger, leopard, wild pig, spotted deer and hog-deer. The small game consisted of hares, peafowl, black partridge, kyah or swamp partridge, rain-quail, the likh or lesser florican, snipe, geese and wild fowl of all sorts. Of the wild animals only the leopard and wild pig have been able to hold their own and are still found in village jungles: the rest have gone with the clearing of jungle and spread of cultivation. The birds have fared better, for the peafowl and swamp partridge have alone disappeared. A few black partridge and likh are occasionally seen, and snipe, geese, duck and wild fowl appear to be as numerous as ever.

Mammals.

Tigers survived till about 20 years ago. The Barind beyond Godāgāri was beaten every year for them by the Nawāb of Murshidābād, and as late as 1894 several were killed by the Collector of Rājshāhi and another sportsman within three miles of Rāmpur Boālia. The last of which there is any information was seen at Kharchaka in 1900.

Leopards are still fairly numerous and as bold as ever. One was shot in the Central Jail at Rāmpur Boālia in February 1907—it had climbed over one of the jail walls—and another was seen in the town in January 1915. One case is known of a leopard which took to man-eating a few years ago and killed four persons in the Rājapur police out-post. Most of the leopards are of small size and haunt the thickets and patches of jungle which are so numerous in the district. They are frequently trapped in the village of Sirol, two miles from Rāmpur Boālia, which also used to be infested by tiger-cats. Other kinds of wild cats, jackals foxes and hares are numerous.

Wild pigs are very common, especially on the *chars*. They literally swarm in some localities and do immense damage to

the paddy and sugarcane crops, on which they descend at night. In fact in some places the villagers have taken to making molasses from the juice of the date-palm owing to the inroads of wild pigs on sugarcane plantations. The *char* pigs do not confine their attention to crops. They will eat carrion when they can get it, and have even been known to break up and devour cattle that have been bogged. Excellent pig-sticking may be had both on the *chars* and the mainland.

Last among the mammals may be mentioned the Gangetic porpoise (*susuk*), which is common both in the Ganges and Atrai and also in the deep water basin of the Chalan Bil.

During the cold weather both the Ganges and inland waters Birds. are visited by great flocks of wild fowl, duck, teal and snipe. Wild duck and teal are especially numerous on the Chalan Bil, the Dubalhāti Bil 6 miles south of Naogāon, and the Hālti Bil near the Mādhunagar railway-station, all of which are large shallow land-locked waters. Snipe are numerous in the *bils* and swampy water-logged tracts all over the district. Wild geese can be shot on the great *chars* and sand banks of the Padma, where also adjutants and pelican have been met with. Other common water-fowl are the coot, moor-hen, dabchick, heron and crane; plover and sand-pipers or snippets are almost ubiquitous on and near rivers and *bils*. Green pigeon are fairly plentiful, and, as already stated, black partridge, the kyah or swampy partridge, rain-quail and the likh or lesser florican still survive.

Of birds other than game birds, the name is legion—the district is, indeed, particularly rich in birds—but the limits of space forbid the mention of any but a few of the commonest kinds. Vultures are exceptionally numerous as compared with western areas. They may be seen perched on trees all over the district awaiting their prey, and have no lack of sustenance, there being plenty of carrion for them to feed on. The fishing eagle is conspicuous near *bils* and rivers. The most common representative of the cuckoo family are the crow-pheasant with black wings and copper-coloured body and the *koil*, called the brain fever bird from its call, which closely resembles the words “brain fever.” The incessant repetition of the call in a high crescendo is a feature of the hot weather days: and during the night the cry of night-jar or goat-sucker is constantly heard—a resonant ringing note extraordinarily like the sound of a stone falling on ice.

Fish.

Owing to its numerous rivers and the large water area covered by *bils* the district is well stocked with fish. The annual value of the Padma fisheries alone has been estimated at 2 lakhs and those of the Atrai are also of considerable value; the fish of the latter river have a wide reputation for the excellence of their flavour. Those excellent fish, the *hilsa*, are caught in large numbers in the Padma. Of other fish, the most popular are three of the carp family, *viz.*, the *rui* or *rahu* (*Labeo rohita*) the *kalbans* (*Labeo calbani*) and the *katta* (*Catla buehanani*). They frequently attain a large size and are good table fish. The *mirgal* (*Cirrhina mrigala*) is another carp of inferior flavour. Other common fish are silurids, such as the *boal* (*Wallago*), *māgur* (*Clarius magur*), *air* (*Macrones aor*), *tengra* (*Macrones corsula*) and *bachua* (*Pseudotropicus garua*). The *magur* is a fresh water fish which flourishes in dirty stagnant water, as does the curious little climbing perch called the *koi* (*Annabas scandens*) which has the power of pulling itself up on the bank by its spines. The last is very common in the *bils* near Dubalhāti, a fact which helps to explain the legend that the revenue paid by the proprietor to the Moghuls consisted of 20,000 *koi* fish a year. Mussell shells containing inferior pearls are found in the Chalan Bil and the rivers to the east.

Reptiles.

Rājshāhi has an assortment of the usual snakes found in Northern Bengal. The commonest poisonous snakes are the cobra, the *karait* (*Bungarus cœruleus*) and the banded *karait* (*Bungarus fasciatus*). The Russel's Viper is also common, and the king cobra or hamadyrad (*Naja bungarus*) is occasionally found. This last cobra feeds principally upon other snakes, (whence its name *Opiophagus*), and has the reputation of being excessively fierce and aggressive. It grows to a length of seven or eight feet: the colour is olive brown with darker or paler cross-bands; the young are black with yellow rings. Of non-poisonous snakes, the largest is the *dhāman* or rat snake (*Zamenis mucosus*), which often measures between 6 and 7 feet in length: it lives on small mammals, lizards and frogs. Other harmless snakes are the *gharmauni*, *hele* and *jaldora*, the last being perhaps the commonest water snake.

Two kinds of crocodiles are found in the principal rivers and also in a few old tanks, *viz.*, the blunt-nosed *magar* (*Crocodilus palustris*), which is called locally the *kumbhār* or *bocha*, and the *ghariāl* (*gavialis*), *i.e.*, the long-snouted, fish-eating crocodile. The *magar* rarely exceeds 12 feet in length, while the *ghariāl* sometimes grows to 8 feet. The common

river turtle (*Testudo elegans*) is found in most of the rivers, and is eaten by some of the lower orders.

The climate of Rājshāhi is not characterised by great extremes of heat and rainfall, owing to the geographical situation of the district, which ensures it against the direct action of disturbing influences, such as the sea in the south, the strong monsoon current in the east and the Himalayas to the north. Its intermediate position from a climatic point of view was noticed by Sir Joseph Hooker, who in his *Himalayan Journals* wrote as follows about Rāmpur Boālia :—

“Being at the head of the Gangetic delta, which points from the Sunderbunds obliquely to the north-west, it is much damper than any locality further west, as is evidenced by two kinds of *Calamus* palm abounding, which do not ascend the Ganges beyond Monghyr. Advancing eastwards, the dry north-west wind of the Gangetic valley, which blows here in occasional gusts, is hardly felt; and easterly winds, rising after the sun (or in other words, following the heating of the open dry country), blow down the great valley of the Burram-pooter, or south-easterly ones come up from the Bay of Bengal. The western land of the Gangetic delta is thus placed in what are called “the variables” in naval phraseology; but only so far as its superficial winds are concerned, for its great atmospheric current always blows from the Bay of Bengal, and flows over all Northern India to the lofty regions of Central Asia.”

The hot season commences early in March with the cessation of the northerly winds, which are a marked and agreeable feature of the cold weather. South-westerly and hot westerly winds prevail during the closing days of March and the whole of April, when dust storms are of frequent occurrence. Southerly winds prevail in May and south-easterly winds during the monsoon from June to the middle of October, when cool nights begin to give indication of the approach of the cold season.

Mean temperature increases from 63° in January to 85 in April, May and June. It is about 83 during the monsoon months, and falls to 72° in November and 65° in December. The highest average maximum temperature is 96 in April, and the highest average minimum is 78 in July and August. The lowest average minimum is 51 in January. The maximum temperature is 108° and the lowest 42°. The daily variation is often great, *e.g.*, in May the temperature rises to 106 and falls at night to 78°.

CLIMATE.

Tempera
ture.

Rainfall.

Rainfall is very light from November to February, increases somewhat in March and April, the season of local disturbances, and continues uniform at about 11 inches during the monsoon months June to September. In May and October the rainfall is about 5 inches and is due to the occasional incursion of cyclonic storms, when heavy rain may fall for several days at a time. The main causes of rainfall are shallow land depressions, which frequently form during the monsoon months, and the shifting winds which, with the small oscillations of the atmospheric pressure and the high humidity then prevailing, are sufficient to maintain daily and, at times, heavy rainfall. The total average fall for the year at Rāmpur Boālia is 55½ inches, the heaviest on record being 90 inches in 1861 and the lightest 32 inches in 1873. The following light falls have occurred during the last 15 years:—35 inches in 1907 and 37 inches in 1908, 1909 and 1910. On the other hand 73 inches fell in 1905 and again in 1914.

The following table gives the salient meteorological statistics for Rāmpur Boālia:—

| | | TEMPERATURE. | | | | | HUMI- DITY. | RAINFALL. | | BARO- METER. |
|-----------|-----|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------|----------------|-----------|-------|-----------------|
| | | Mean. | Mean maximum. | Mean minimum. | Mean range. | | | Inches. | Days. | |
| | | | | | Daily. | Month. | | | | |
| Mean. | | | | | | Mean. | | | | Mean. |
| January | ... | 63 | 76 | 51 | 24 | 28 | 83 | 0·4 | 1 | 30·01 |
| February | ... | 66 | 79 | 53 | 26 | 36 | 77 | 0·8 | 1 | 29·95 |
| March | ... | 77 | 89 | 64 | 25 | 35 | 71 | 1·1 | 2 | ·84 |
| April | ... | 85 | 96 | 73 | 23 | 30 | 76 | 1·8 | 3 | ·73 |
| May | ... | 86 | 94 | 75 | 19 | 21 | 82 | 5·6 | 4 | ·87 |
| June | ... | 85 | 92 | 77 | 15 | 18 | 88 | 10·0 | 13 | ·53 |
| July | ... | 84 | 89 | 78 | 11 | 12 | 89 | 10·8 | 15 | ·52 |
| August | ... | 83 | 88 | 78 | 10 | 11 | 90 | 10·4 | 15 | ·58 |
| September | ... | 83 | 88 | 77 | 11 | 12 | 89 | 10·0 | 12 | ·89 |
| October | ... | 81 | 88 | 73 | 15 | 22 | 83 | 4·1 | 5 | ·83 |
| November | ... | 72 | 82 | 62 | 20 | 27 | 82 | 0·4 | 1 | ·95 |
| December | .. | 65 | 76 | 53 | 23 | 29 | 82 | 0·1 | ... | 30·01 |
| Year | ... | 77 | 86 | 68 | 19 | 20 | 83 | 55·5 | 76 | 29·78 |

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

AT the dawn of history the country now forming the district of Rājshāhi was part of the territory of the Pundras or Paundras, which was known by the name of Pundravardhana. This was an extensive tract bounded on the east by the river Karatoya, on the west by the Mahānanda and on the south by the Padma. To the north the boundary was ill-defined, but it seems to have marched with the borders of the wild country held by Himalayan hill tribes, such as the Kirātas. In other words, it roughly corresponded with the modern territorial division of North Bengal, excluding Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and part of Pābna. The Pundras obviously date back to a very remote period, for they are mentioned in the *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa*, one of the oldest Brāhmanas, which is anterior to the Upanishads and is certainly earlier than 1000 B.C.

In this work they are classed with the Andhras, Savaras and others as among the most degraded classes of men, rabble for the most part, descendants of Viswāmitra. "The statement," writes Rai Manmohan Chakravarti Bahadur, "that the Pundras were descendants of the sage Viswāmitra would seem to imply that they had Aryan blood, though degraded; and this opinion survived in the epic period. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivamsa*, the Pandras, with Angas, Vangas, Suhmas and Kalingas, are said to be descended from the blind sage Dirghatamas (born of the queen of the demon Bāli). As to their degradation the *Mahābhārata* says that these Kshattriyas were outcasted from indignation of the Brahmans; while according to the *Manusamhita* they sank gradually to the condition of Sudras in consequence of the omission of sacred rites and for not consulting Brāhmanas. The Pandras were too powerful to be left out of the Aryan pale, but had rites and customs so different from those in the home of Vedic Brahmanism, that a theory of degradation was set up. The difference originated

no doubt from the fact that the twice-born castes among the Pundras represented an older immigration, who had been influenced in one direction by the surrounding tribes of *Dasyas*, while the religious faith in the Madhyadesa had been changing in quite a different direction. The *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivamsa*, and following them the *Purānas*, name only one king of Paundra, viz., Bāsudeva. In the legends he is described as a powerful sovereign, ruling Pundras, Vangas and Kirātas, *i.e.*, the greater part of Bengal, and surnamed *Paundra-draka*.* Bāsudeva is said to have been conquered by Bhīmā, while a son of his, Sudeva by name, was killed by Krishna with his discus.

In later periods there are only scattered references to Pundravardhana, as in the *Asok-āvalāna*, where Asoka is said to have put to death many naked sectarians (presumably Jains) in Pundravardhana, because they did despite to the Buddhist worship. A detailed account of the country is, however, given by Hsien Tsiang (or Yuan Chwang), who visited it about 640 A.D. The country, he said, was inhabited by a flourishing people; tanks, hospices and flowery groves were scattered over it. The climate was genial; the land was low and moist; abundant crops were raised. The people respected learning and were divided between three faiths. The early Jains, called Digambara Nigranthas, were very numerous. There were 100 Deva temples (most of which were probably Saiva and Sākta) while there were twenty Buddhist monasteries with some 2,000 brethren. The locale of the capital is disputed. General Cunningham has identified it with Mahāsthān, the ruins of which lie seven miles north of Bogra.

PALA
KINGS.

The first historical event of real interest is the rise of the Pāla kings. Local patriotism rightly regards the reign of Pālas as the most glorious period in the history of Rājshāhi, for their home was in Varendra (the name by which Pundravardhana, *i.e.*, the districts of Rājshāhi, Pogra, Dinajpur, Rangpur and part of Pābna came to be known) and they extended their rule not only over Bengal, but also over Bihar and a considerable portion of Northern India. Till recent years there has been little information available regarding this Bengali dynasty, but the researches of scholars and archæologists have brought to light much new material: the fame of the Pāla kings has in fact been recovered by the patient study of inscriptions and copper-plate grants. We now know that there were at least 17 kings

* Notes on the Geography of old Bengal, J. A. S. B., May 1908.

of the line whose names are given below in chronological order—

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Gopāla I. | 9. Mahipāla I. |
| 2. Dharmapāla I. | 10. Nayapāla. |
| 3. Devapāla. | 11. Vighrahapāla III. |
| 4. Vighrahapāla I. | 12. Mahipāla II. |
| or Surapāla I. | 13. Surapāla II. |
| 5. Nārāyanapāla. | 14. Rāmapāla. |
| 6. Rājyapāla. | 15. Kumārapāla. |
| 7. Gopāla II. | 16. Gopāla III. |
| 8. Vighrahapāla II. | 17. Madanapāla. |

Prior to the establishment of their rule the country appears to have been in a state of anarchy, which is metaphorically described by the Tibetan historian Tāranāth as that of fishes, the strong preying on the weak. "Every Brāhman, Kshattriya and Vaisya made himself chief of different districts; but there was no king ruling the whole country. The widow of one of these chiefs used to kill every night the person who had been chosen king. Gopāla, who had been elected king, managed to free himself and obtained the kingdom." The fact that a king could be chosen by election, in the midst of a gladiatorial struggle for supremacy, appears curious; but Tāranāth's account is confirmed by the Khālīmpur grant of Dharmapāla which states that Gopāla was elected king by the people in order to put an end to anarchy. From another Tibetan work, the *Pag-samjou-zang*, we learn that Gopāla was born near the capital of Pundravardhana, and his dynasty may therefore be fairly described as Bengali. His successor, Dharmapāla, is also designated "Lord of the East" in an inscription found on the Garudastambha, a stone pillar extant near Mangalbāri Hāt in Dinājpur, while in the Gwalior stone inscription of his great rival, the emperor Bhoja of the Partihara dynasty, he is distinctly called Vangapati, *i.e.*, lord of Bengal.

The Palās, who were Kshattriyas, reigned four and a half centuries and from the evidence of copperplate grants and pillar inscriptions we know not only the names of the kings, but also a good deal about their system of administration. The name Pāla, it may be explained, means Protector and is given to the dynasty because it forms part of the personal names of the kings. Gopāla, the founder of the line (*circa* 750 A.D.) after consolidating his power in Bengal, extended his rule over South Bihar, where he established a great Buddhist monastery (*Vihāra*), from which the town of Bihar, and

Gopāla
750 A.D.

subsequently the whole province, took its name. This town became the head-quarters of the governors of Bihar under the Pāla kings.

Dharma-
pāla, 800
A.D.

His son and successor Dharmapāla (800 A.D.) was a mighty monarch of wide dominion. According to the Tibetan historian Tāranāth, his rule extended from the Bay of Bengal to Delhi in the north and to the Vindhyan range in the south; and it is certain that Kanauj acknowledged his sway, for he is known to have dethroned its king and installed another in his place. Dharmapāla held his court, at least for some time, in the ancient capital of Pātaliputra, the modern Patna, and founded the famous Buddhist monastery of Vikramasila.

Devapāla.

Devapāla, the third of the Pāla kings, extended his power still further, conquering Kāmarupa (Assam) and Kalinga, *i.e.*, Orissa and the Northern Circars of Madras. Like the other kings of his house, he was zealous in the cause of Buddhism, and is reputed to have waged war with the unbelievers, destroying forty of their strongholds. There is nothing of interest to record about the next five sovereigns, whose names were Vighrahapāla I (*alias* Surapāla), Nārāyanapāla, Rājyapāla, Gopāla II, and Vighrahapāla II.

Mongolian
interreg-
num.

Towards the close of the tenth century there was an interregnum, a Himalayan tribe called Kāmbojas setting up one of their chiefs as king. This is admitted in an inscription, now preserved in the Dinājpur Rājbari, which states that in the pride of his arm Mahipāla slew in battle all his opponents, recovered his father's kingdom, which had been snatched away by people having no claim to it, and put down his lotus foot on the head of princes. The usurper of the Pāla throne is described in the Dinājpur pillar inscription as "king of Gauda of the Kāmboja family." Nepalese tradition applies the name of *Kāmboja-desa* to Tibet, and the usurper must have come from either Tibet or Bhutān at the head of a Mongolian horde.

Mahipāla I
980-1030
A.D.

Mahipāla is known to have been reigning in A.D. 1026, and may be assumed to have recovered his ancestral throne about 980 A.D. "Of all the Pāla kings he is the best remembered, and songs in his honour, which used to be sung in many parts of Bengal until recent times, are still to be heard in remote corners of Orissa and Kuch Bihar." During his rule Buddhist missionaries were sent to Tibet, and the propaganda was continued by his successor Nayapāla, under whose reign the famous Buddhist priest Atisa went to Tibet from the monastery of Vikramasila and succeeded in introducing a purer form of Buddhism. Nayapāla was

succeeded by his son Vigrahapāla III, and the latter by Mahipāla II about 1080 A.D.

Mahipāla II was an oppressive king, whose attempts to substitute an uncontrolled despotism for the constitutional monarchy of his predecessors provoked a popular rebellion, headed by Divya or Divyoka (Dibo), a Kaibartta by caste. Mahipāla II was killed by the rebels, who set up Divyoka in his place. Divyoka appears, however, to have been a Protector rather than a monarch and was succeeded by his nephew Bhīma. Prince Rāmapāla, the brother of Mahipāla, now succeeded in gathering a large force from Magadha, Anga and the neighbouring countries and crossing the Ganges defeated Bhīma in a battle fought in the south-west of Rājshahi or the south of Mālda. Bhīma's capital, Damara, was sacked, and Rāmapāla recovered the throne. There are many legends about Bhīma in the district, which are popularly connected with the hero of the *Mahābhārata* but may well have had their origin in the exploits of this popular ruler.

A popular rebellion.

Rāmapāla is described by Tāranāth as possessing a vigorous understanding and widely extended power. After defeating the Kaibartta usurper, he conquered Mithila or North Bihar, and it is clear that his dominions also included Kāmarupa or Assam, because his son Kumārapāla* conferred the government of that country with kingly powers upon a valiant minister named Vaidyadeva. Buddhism, although then declining in Hindustan, flourished in the Pāla dominions during the reign of Rāmapāla, the monasteries of Magadha being crowded with thousand of residents.

Rāmapāla,
1084-1130
A.D.

After the death of Rāmapāla there was a struggle for independence in various parts of the kingdom, which was put down by his son Kumārapāla, who had already administered Varendra as Viceroy. He was succeeded by Gopāla III and the latter by Madanapāla, with whom the authority of the Pāla kings in Bengal finally disappeared.

"The Pāla dynasty deserves remembrance as one of the most remarkable of Indian dynasties. No other royal line, save that of the Andhras, endured so long, for four and a half centuries. Dharmapāla and Devapāla succeeded in making Bengal one of the great powers of India, and although later kings had not the control of realms so wide or possessed influence so extensive, their dominion was far from being contemptible."†

Adminis-
tration of
the Pālas.

* It has been surmised that Kumārapur, on the road from Rāmpur Boālia to Godāgari, where there are some ruins, was named after this prince.

† V. A. Smith, *The Early History of India* (1914), pp 400-1.

The copper-plate grants of the Pāla kings, *i.e.*, grants of lands to various persons inscribed on copper plates, show that their administration was somewhat highly organized, for they mention various territorial divisions and different grades of officials. The largest territorial division, the *bhukti*, contained so many *mandalas*, each *mandala* so many *visayas*, and each *visaya* so many *grāmas* or villages. In addition to police and revenue officials of different grades, there were overseers of elephants, horses, cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep. The taxes appear to have included, besides the royal land tax of a sixth part of the produce, a number of subsidiary rates and cesses payable on different accounts.

The Pāla kings were Buddhists, and under their rule Buddhism flourished. The famous university of Nalanda lay within their realm. Dharmapāla, the second and perhaps the greatest Pāla king, founded another great university at Vikramasila; and there was a third seat of learning at Jagdala in North Bengal. Nor was art neglected. According to the Tibetan historian, Tāranāth, two great religious painters and sculptors, named Dhimān and Vitapāla, flourished in Varendra in the reigns of Dharmapāla and Devapāla; and it is believed that some of the fine specimens of mediæval sculpture found in Bengal are the work of those artists or of the schools established by them. Tāranāth, indeed, claims that art found its only patrons in the Buddhists. "Wherever Buddhism prevailed, skilful religious artists were found. Wherever *Mlechhas* (Muhammadans) ruled, they disappeared. Where the Tirthya (Hindu) doctrines prevailed, unskilful artists came to the front."

Although the Pālas were Buddhists, there is evidence that Brahmanical Hinduism enjoyed a large measure of tolerance under their rule. The hereditary ministers of four successive kings of the dynasty, including the two greatest, viz., Dharmapāla and Devapāla, belonged to a Brahman family, and grants of land to Hindu temples and Brahmans were made by different sovereigns of the line. This tolerance is characteristic of the mediæval kings.*

* This account of the Pāla kings has been compiled from the following sources :— V. A. Smith, *Early History of India* (1914); Rāma Prasād Chānda, *Dināpur Pillar Inscription*, J. A. S. B., September 1911; Akshay Kumar Maitra, *The Stones of Varendra (The Garuda-Stambha)*, *Modern Review*, August 1912; F. J. Monahan, *Varendra*, J.R.A.S., January 1914. The fullest and most up-to-date accounts will be found in *The Pālas of Bengal* by R. D. Banerji published in the *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. V, No. 3 (1915) and in a series of lectures on the *Downfall of the Pāla Kingdom of Bengal* delivered in 1915 to the Calcutta University by Babu Akshay Kumar Maitra, B.L., of Rājshāhi.

The Senas who were originally a family of Southern India, replaced the Pālas in the twelfth century, and Varendra was part of their dominions. There is no proof of any direct connection of the Senas with Rājshāhi, but it has been suggested by a local scholar Pabu Rāma Prasād Chānda, that Vijaya Sena, who wrested Varendra from the Pālas and was the father of the more famous Vallāla Sena (Ballāl Sen), established his capital at Vijayanagar, 9 miles from Rāmpur Poālia towards Godāgāri, and that his successors transferred the capital to Lakshmanavati or Gaur. According to the *Pavanadutam*, the capital of the Senas was at Vijayapuri, and it is pointed out that at Vijayanagar there are ruins of a Rājbari which is said to have been that of Vijaya Raja.*

THE SENA
KINGS.

At the close of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, the fabric of Hindu monarchy was swept away by the Muhammadan invasion. For over a century Bengal was administered by Governors appointed by the Emperors of Delhi. In 1338 A.D., however, Fakir-ud-dīn Mubārak Shāh succeeded in establishing his independence. Bengal broke away from the empire, and for the next 200 years was ruled by independent kings: during this period four dynasties and 24 kings followed each other in more or less rapid succession. The kings of the first dynasty (that of Ilyās Shāh) reigned for nearly a century and a half (1339-1486) with one short interlude in the first half of the fifteenth century, when they were supplanted by a Bengali Hindu and his descendants, i.e., by the house of Raja Kans or Ganesh.

MUHAM-
MADAN
RULE.

The rule of this Raja has a special interest for Rājshāhi, for he is believed to have held Rājshāhi before he became a Sultān. The author of the *Riyazu-s-Salatīn*, which contains the fullest account of his reign (an account which was probably compiled from local traditions) states that he was the zamindar of Bhatnuria and that he attacked and slew Shamsuddīn, the Muhammadan king of Gaur, and usurped his throne. Bhatnuria is still the designation of a *pargana*, but the name was formerly used in a wider sense. In Rennell's map of 1778 this is the name given to the country on both sides of the Atrai river, its boundaries being the river Mahānanda and its tributary the Punarbhaba on the west, the Ganges on the south, the Karatoya on the east,

RAJA
KANS OR
GANESH.

* Cf. *The Pālas of Bengal* by R. D. Banerji, Memoirs A. S. B., vol. V, No. 3 (p. 104). Vijaya Sena is referred to by Mr. James Kennedy as Vijaya Sena of Pundra. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. 11, page 317.

and Dinājpur on the north, *i.e.*, practically the present district of Rājshāhi. "No event in Bengali history," writes Rai Monmolian Chakravarti Bahadur, "is more remarkable than the intrusion of this Hindu king in the otherwise complete succession of Musalmān Governors. In spite of two centuries of Islamic domination, one is truly surprised to find a Hindu Raja again in Gaur; and nothing would have been more welcome than a narration of the facts leading up to this revolution. But an unusually thick darkness veils this chapter from our eyes; no coins or inscriptions of his time have been found, and no contemporary account, either Hindu or Musalmān, exists.*" There is even a doubt as to his name. The Muhammadan histories, including the *Riyazu-s-Salatīn*, call him Kans, but the Persian spelling of Kans and Ganesh is very similar and the true name is thought to be Ganesh. This is borne out by the only Hindu account of him that is known to exist, *viz.*, the *Advaita-prakāsh*, a life of the Vaishnava saint Advaita, who was a colleague of Chaitanya. This states that Raja Ganesh, following the advice given him by the grandfather of Advaita, killed the Bādshāh of Gaur and became king therein, an account consonant with that of the *Riyazu-s-Salatīn*. The *Advaita-prakāsh* was composed about 1568-69 A.D., and is earlier than the Muhammadan histories; and it may be presumed that the Hindu king's name would be given more accurately in a Bengali book than in the later Musalmān annals.

It is on these annals, however, that we depend for our knowledge of the Hindu king. The *Ain-i-Akbari* remarks that a native of Bengal named Kansī fraudulently dispossessed Shamsuddīn, while the *Tabakat-i-Akbari* merely states the fact of Kans's usurption, and assigns him a reign of seven years. Firishta, who has been followed by Stewart in his *History of Bengal*, says that he usurped the throne on the death of Shamsuddīn. "Though no Muhammadan, he mixed with them and loved them, so much so that some Muhammadans testified to his conversion, and claimed for him a Muhammadan burial. After a vigorous reign of seven years, he went to the world of annihilation, and was succeeded by his son, who had the honour of being converted to Islām."

The fullest account is given in the *Riyazu-s-Salatīn*, which represents the views of his enemies. After describing how he slew Shamsuddīn and seized his throne, it gives an account of his persecution of the Muhammadans and tells us how a saint

* M. M. Chakravarti, *Notes on Gaur and other old places*, J. A. S. B., July 1909.

named Kutb-ul-Alam who, in despair at the Rāja's persecutions, invoked the aid of Sultān Ibrahim of Jaunpur. The Sultān invaded Bengal, but was induced to withdraw by the saint, with whom Raja Kans came to terms, the condition being that he and his son Jadu, then 12 years old, should become converts to Islām. The Raja broke his promise so far as he was himself concerned, but sent his son to the saint, who converted him and proclaimed him Sultān under the name of Jalāluddin. Kans subsequently deposed him, resumed his old authority and again oppressed the Musalmāns. The whole account of the *Riyazu-s-Salatīn* is so interesting that it may be quoted *in extenso*.

"When Sultān Shamsuddīn died, Raja Kans, a Hindu zamindar, seized the whole kingdom of Bengal, and sat proudly on the throne. Oppression and bloodshed followed. He tried to kill all Muhammadans, and had many learned men murdered. In fact, his object was to drive Islām from his kingdom. One day, people say, Shaikh Badrul Islām, son of Shaikh Muinuddin Abbās, went to the wicked tyrant, but did not greet him. When the Raja asked him why he had not saluted him, he replied, 'Learned men are not supposed to greet infidels, especially an infidel tyrant who likes to shed the blood of Muhammadans.' The unclean heretic was silenced; he winced under the reply, and thought of nothing else but to kill the Shaikh. He, therefore, called him one day to a room, the door of which was very low and narrow. But the Shaikh saw through the plan,* and put his foot first over the threshold, and then entered without bending his head. This annoyed the Raja so much, that he gave orders to take him to the path of his brethren. The Shaikh was at once executed. All the remaining learned men, in the same day, were put on board a ship and were drowned in the middle of the river.

"The usurpation of this infidel and the slaughter of Muhammadans drove at last the saint Nur Kutb-ul-Alam to despair, and he wrote a letter to Sultān Ibrahim-i-Sharqi (of Jaunpur), who at that time had extended his kingdom to the (eastern) frontier of Bihar, complaining of the injustice done to Islam and the Muslims, and asking the king to march against the infidel. Ibrahim received the letter with humility, and consulted with Kāzi Shihābuddīn Jaunpuri, the chief of the learned of the age, who was allowed at Court to sit on a silver chair.

* The Raja evidently wished the Shaikh to come to him in a stooping position, which might be looked upon as a *salām*.

The Kāzi represented the worldly and religious advantages that would flow from a war with the infidel on the one hand, and from a visit to the great saint on the other. The king, therefore, collected a large army, invaded Bengal, and pitched his camp at Sarai Firuzpur.

"Raja Kans now applied to Kutb-ul-Alam, begged to be forgiven, and asked him to intercede on his behalf with the king of Jaunpur. The saint replied that at the request of an infidel he could not bid a Muhammadan king stop; in fact, he had himself invited the enemy to come. The Raja placed his head on the feet of the saint, and said he was willing to perform anything he ordered him to do, whereupon Kutb-ul-Alam told him that he would not interfere until he was converted to Islām. The Raja placed the finger of acceptance upon his eye, but the wife of the infidel led him back to perdition, and he evaded conversion. But he took his boy, who was twelve years old and had the name of Jadu, to the saint and said, 'I have got old and wish to renounce the world; make this boy a Muhammadan and give him the kingdom of Bengal.' Kutb-ul-Alam thereupon put some *pān* which he was chewing into Jadu's* mouth, taught him the creed, and thus made him Muhammadan, giving him the name of Jalīluddīn. According to the Raja's wish, he also sent a proclamation through the town, ordering the people to read the Friday prayer in the name of the new king. The blessed law of the Prophet was thus carried out with new vigour.

"Kutb-ul-Alam now went to king Ibrahim and asked him to return. The king looked angrily at Kāzi Shihābuddīn, who said to Kutb-ul-Alām: "At your request the king has come here, and now you come to him as ambassador to implore his mercy. What shall men think of this?" The saint replied, "When I called you, a tyrant oppressed the faithful; but now, in consequence of your approach, the new ruler has become a Muhammadan; fight with infidels, not with a king that belongs to the Faith." This silenced the Kāzi; but as the king still looked angry, the Kāzi had the boldness to enter into scientific discussion with the saint. After many questions and answers Kutb said, "To look on the poor with contempt, or entangle them in examinations, brings no man prosperity. Your miserable end is at hand." He then looked even at the Sultān with an expression of anger. Ibrahim now got vexed, and returned with a sorry heart to

* As saints do with their pupils, or in order to break the boy's caste.

Jaunpur. It is said that not long after, Sultān Ibrahim and Kāzi Shihābuddīn died.

“When Raja Kans heard that Sultān Ibrahim was dead, he deposed Jalāluddīn, took again the reins of the government into his own hands, and ruled according to his false tenets. He made several hollow cows of gold, threw Jalāl into the mouth of one, and pulled him out behind; the gold was then distributed among the Brāhmans. He hoped that the boy would thus return to his old faith. But as Jalāl had been converted into Islam by a saint like Kutb-ul-Alam, he remained faithful to his new belief, and the talk of the infidels made no impression upon him.

‘Raja Kans now again commenced to persecute the Muhammadans. When the measure of his cruelties was full, Shaikh Anwar, son of Kutb-ul-Alam, said one day to his father “It is a matter of regret that, with you as guardian saint, the Muhammadans have so much to suffer at the hand of this infidel.” The saint was just at his devotions, and angry at the interruption, he exclaimed, “The misery will not cease till thy blood is shed.” Anwar knew that whatever his father said was sure to come true; he, therefore, replied that he was a willing martyr. The oppression of Raja Kans reached the climax, when he imprisoned Shaikh Anwar and his brother’s son Shaikh Zahid. But as he dared not kill them, he banished them to Sunargāon, in the hope that they would confess where Kutb-ul-Alam had buried his money and that of his father. But even though they were sent to Sunargāon, and were much threatened, no money was found, because none had ever been buried, and Shaikh Anwar was ordered to be killed. Before his execution, he said that at such and such a place they would find a large pot. People dug and found a large vessel with only one gold coin in it. On being asked what had become of the other money, Anwar replied, “It seems to have been stolen.” Anwar no doubt said so by inspiration from the unseen world.

‘It is said that on the very day on which Shaikh Anwar died, Raja Kans went from his palace to the infernal regions. But according to the statement of some, he was killed by his son Jalāluddīn, who, though in prison, had won over the officers. The oppressive rule of this monster had lasted seven years.’

As regards the date of the reign of Raja Kans or Ganesh, Professor Blochmann gives 1405-14 A.D., and Rai Monmohan Chakravarti Bahadur 1414-21 A.D., while others give 1409-14

A.D. Jalāluddīn succeeded his father and ruled well and vigorously (1414-31), the whole of Bengal acknowledging his sway. He appears to have been a zealous Musalmān, under whose government the province prospered. He was succeeded by his son Shamsuddīn Ahmad Shāh, a cruel and tyrannical prince, who fell by the hand of an assassin in 1442, after which Nasīruddīn Mahmūd Shāh of the house of Ilyas Shāh recovered the throne.

A HINDU
REVIVAL.

It remains to add that there appears to have been a Hindu revival during this period. "When the Sultāns became independent, connection with Delhi or the western provinces (the home of foreigners) was more or less cut off. The nobles and officers of the Sultāns grew more social with their Hindu neighbours and subjects, a relation which was not much disturbed by the intrusion of foreigners, a few refugees and traders. By this closer social relation, and from their political domination, superior activity and greater freedom from social restrictions, the Musalmān rulers could and did produce a stronger effect on the Hindus than had been done before. This fact, when properly grasped, explains to some extent various contemporary facts such as the success of the Musalmān saints, the conversion of a considerable number of Hindus, the inclusion of the worship of *pīrs* like Satyapīr in current Hindu faith, the free acceptance of patronage by Bengali poets from their Moslem neighbours, and also the wholesale adoption of Indo-Saracenic details in the Hindu religious buildings. This closer touch with the Musalmāns also stirred the dormant activities of the conservative Hindus. Hence during the later Islamic rule in Bengal, a Hindu revival is distinctly traceable. This revival began early in the fifteenth century with the seizure of the Bengal throne by the Hindu zamindar Ganesha, and with the continuation of his dynastic rule for the third of a century."*

A HINDU
COURT.

Under the Musalmān rule the Hindu Rajas maintained their own courts and kept up considerable state. An interesting account of one of these courts, which is identified by Dinesh Chandra Sen in his *History of Bengali Language and Literature* with that of Raja Kans Nārāyan of Tāhirpur in Rājshāhi is given by Krittivāsa, the famous translator of the Rāmāyana.

Krittivāsa lived for many years in a *tol* on the bank of the Padma, and when his education was finished sought the patronage of the Raja. He sent the Raja five *slokas* asking for an

* M. M. Chakravarti, *Bengali Temples and their Characteristics*, J. A. S. B., May 1909.

interview. One of the Raja's guards came, carrying a golden staff, and informed Krittivāsa that his prayer was granted. Krittivāsa followed the guard through nine successive gates, and came to the presence of the Raja, who sat on a throne, lion-like in majesty. On his right sat the minister Jagadananda, behind him was Sunanda, a Brāhman, and on his left was Kedar Khān. Among the surrounding ministers and courtiers, was Gandharva Raya, handsome as a Gandharva, Sundar, Srivatsa and others, Mukunda, the Court Pandit, and Jagadananda Raya, son of the prime minister.

"The durbār of the Raja," wrote the poet, "shone like the presence of the gods, and I was charmed with the sight. The Raja was in a jovial mood; many distinguished people were standing beside him. In several parts of the place songs and dances were going on, and all the people were moving to and fro in a great hurry. A red mat was spread in the courtyard, and over it there was a striped cotton sheet; a beautiful silk canopy hung overhead, and the Raja was there enjoying the sunshine of the month of Māgha. I took my stand at some distance from the Raja, but he beckoned me with his hand to come nearer. A minister loudly pronounced the order, requiring me to approach the Raja, which I did in all haste. I stood at a distance of four cubits from him. I recited seven verses in Sanskrit, to which he listened attentively. Five gods inspired me, and by the grace of Śaraswati, the rhyme and metre came spontaneously. Sweet were the verses and varied were the metres. The Raja was pleased and ordered me to be garlanded. Kedar Khān sprinkled drops of sweet-scented sandal on my head. The Raja presented me with a silk robe. He asked his courtiers what gift would best become the occasion. They replied "Whatever you may deem fit. Your recognition is the only true reward of merit." Then they advised me to ask of the Raja whatever I might want. I replied, "Nothing do I accept from anyone. Gifts I avoid. Whatever I do, I care for glory alone. No scholar, however great, can blame my verses." The King was pleased with my answer and requested me to compose the Rāmāyana. With this token of recognition from him I left the court".

"This court," writes Dines Chandra Sen in his *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, "was in all probability that of Kansa Nārāyana of Tāhirpur. Jagadananda, the minister referred to by the poet, was a nephew of the Raja. Mukunda, the Chief Pandit of the court, was probably Mukunda Bhāduri, whose son Śrīkrishna was the prime minister, and whose

grandson, Jagadananda, was a minister of the court. They were all Bārendra Brāhmanas. The title Khān affixed to the name of a courtier named Kedar shows the court to have been already subjected to Muhammadan influence."

Unfortunately the exact date of the Raja and of Krittivāsa himself is uncertain. Dinesh Chandra Sen says in one place that Krittivāsa was born in 1346 A.D., and in another that the year of his birth was 1424 A.D. Romesh Chunder Dutt says that Krittivāsa produced his Bengali version of the Rāmāyana probably about the close of the fifteenth century,* while Sir G. A. Grierson ascribes his work to the sixteenth century.†

MUGHAL
GOVERN-
ORS

"During Muhammadan rule," it has been said, "the authority of the central government varied with the character of the king or the governor for the time being. If he was energetic and masterful, the whole country accepted his authority; but if he was weak and indolent, the local rulers became practically independent. At all times their internal administration was but little interfered with, so long as they paid a regular tribute and furnished troops or supplies for troops when required to do so." Incidentally, every territorial magnate became as independent as he could, and every important zamindar tried to set up as a territorial magnate. This state of things continued down to the end of the seventeenth century.

Sweeping changes were made in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Bengal came under the rule of a strong governor Murshīd Kuli Khān (1704-26). He instituted a rigorous revenue policy, under which zamindars were dispossessed of their estates on any failure in payment of revenue and their properties were given to favourites of the Nawāb or let out to the highest bidders. In this way the old type of hereditary Rajas made way for the modern type, of which the chief representative in this district, and indeed in all Bengal, a province with few old families of distinction, is the Nātor Rāj.

Rise of the
Nātor Raj.

The nucleus of the estate was formed when Rāmjīvan, the founder of the Rāj, obtained possession of the Chakla of Rājshāhi, an extensive tract on the south of the Ganges. According to the *Riyazu-s-Salatin* "Andīnarin, zamindar of the Chakla of Rājshāhi, who was the descendant of a Hindustāni, and who was both capable and efficient, held charge of

* Literature of Bengal (1895), p. 48.

† Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. II, p. 421.

the revenue collections of the Khālśa or Crown lands. In league with him were Ghulām Muhammad and Kalia Jamadār with two hundred troopers. Andīnarain demurred to the payment of the demand and prepared to fight. Murshīd Kuli Khān sent his officer, Muhammad Jān, with a force to chastise him." The forces of Andīnarain were defeated. "Andīnarain from fear of Murshīd Kuli Khān's anger slew himself, and his zamindari was transferred to two Bengal zamindars on the northern side of the Ganges, named Rāmjīvan and Kālī Kunwar, who were punctual in payments of revenue."

Not long afterwards there was a more serious rebellion, insurrection headed by Raja Sītārām, who held a large territory on both sides of the Ganges. The Mughal Faujdār led a punitive expedition against him, but was defeated and killed. The Nawāb thereupon established a blockade, ordering all the neighbouring zamindars to prevent the escape of Sītārām. The rebel chief was at last captured and hanged on a gallows at Murshidābād, with his face in a cow-hide, to add indignity to his punishment, and his whole zamindari was transferred to Rāmjīvan.

During the rule of Alī Vardī Khān, Rājshāhi* was immune from the Marātha raids, which spread havoc on the other side of the Ganges. Its immunity naturally made it a place of refuge for the people of that less favoured tract. According to the *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, the refugees found shelter in both Rāmpur Boālia and Godāgāri. This is the earliest mention of Rāmpur Boālia that I have been able to discover. "Nothing remained to Alī Vardī Khān, but the city of Murshidābād and the countries on the other side of the Ganges. The peaceful inhabitants of this great capital, who, far from having ever seen such devastations, had not so much as the cover of a wall, became exceedingly fearful for their properties and families; and they availed themselves of the rainy season to cross over to the countries on the other side of the Ganges, such as Jahāngīr-nagar, Mālda and Rāmpur Boālia, where most of them built themselves houses, and where they passed their lives. Even the Deputy Governor himself, Nawāzish Muhammad Khān, crossed over with his family, furniture and wealth, and lived at Godāgāri, which is one day's distance from the city, and where he laid the foundation of an habitation for himself and family. Alī Vardī Khān's furniture and effects were

MARATHA
RAIDS.

* In Stewart's History of Bengal it is said that the Marathas obtained possession of Rājshāhi, but the context shows this was Chakla Rājshāhi, south of the Ganges.

likewise sent over." The family of the Nawāb found shelter in Kila Pāruipāra, the ruins of which are still visible at Godā-gāri.

Tradition relates that a Marātha force once penetrated to Pākuria near Singra. The story is that a body of *sannyāsis* looted the temple of Bhawānipur in Bogra, and Bhāskar Pandit, hearing of this sacrilege, marched against them and made them disgorge their plunder, which he restored to the temple. Then, learning of the wealth of the Tagores of Pākuria, he marched there. The Tagore zamindar offered no resistance, but entertained the Marāthas with lavish hospitality, which so pleased the Marātha Chief that he presented him with a sword. This sword is still cherished as an heirloom by the Tagore family of Pākuria.

EARLY
ENGLISH
ADMINIS-
TRATION.

When the British established their rule, the district was included in the great zamindari of Rājshāhi which, as already shown, was even then of recent creation. "The zamindari of Rājshāhi," wrote Warren Hastings in 1786, "the second in rank in Bengal and yielding an annual revenue of about twenty-five lakhs of rupees, has risen to its present magnitude during the course of the last eighty years by accumulating the property of a great number of dispossessed zamindars, although the ancestors of the present possessor had not, by inheritance, a right to the property of a single village within the whole zamindari.*"

The extent of the estate, when Warren Hastings wrote, will be realised from the fact that it had an area of nearly 13,000 square miles and included not only a great part of North Bengal, but also a large portion of the present districts of Murshidābād, Nadia, Jessore, Bīrbhūm, and even Burdwan. Howell stated that it extended over "35 days' travel." According to Grant's *Analysis of the Finances of Bengal* it was "the most unwieldy extensive zamindari of Bengal or perhaps in India." It produced "at least four-fifths of all the silk, raw or manufactured, used in or exported from the effeminated luxurious Empire of Hindustan." The Permanent Settlement proved the ruin of the estate. It was assessed at over 23 lakhs of rupees, and the proprietor was constantly in arrears. "It was," writes Sir William Hunter, "vain to expect the ancient

*Review of the State of Bengal in 1786 (a minute recorded by Warren Hastings) quoted in the Zamindari Settlement of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1879, Vol. I, Appendix VI, p. 109), and in Bengal Manuscript Records by Sir W. W. Hunter, (London, 1894, Vol. I, p. 43).

Rajas of Bengal, encumbered with all the costly paraphernalia of their petty courts and military retainers, to suddenly transform themselves into punctual tax-collectors. Yet this was exactly what the Permanent Settlement did expect of them. It applied to their pompous, lax, and extravagant system of management, the same stringent procedure as it applied to the new class of zamindars with their shrewd habits of business. It was an attempt to reduce under a single rule a state of things essentially complex and multiform. The ancient houses of Bengal broke down under the strain. In 1795, in two years of the Permanent Settlement, the Government recorded that of the whole arrears outstanding for the Province about 'one-half is due' from the great zamindars of Fārhām and Rājshāhi".

'Among the defaulters,' says the *Fifth Report*, 'were some of the oldest and most respectable families in the country. Such were the Rajas of Nadia, Rājshāhi, Bishnupur, Kāsijora, and others, the dismemberment of whose estates, at the end of each succeeding year, threatened them with poverty and ruin, and in some instances presented difficulties to the revenue officers in their endeavour to preserve undiminished the amount of the public assessment'.

From the old records of the Collectorate we find that in March 1783 Mr. John Evelyn was engaged in making a settlement of Rājshāhi with head-quarters at Murādbāgh, a suburb of Murshidābād. In August 1783 Mr. George Dallas was made Collector, and in the phraseology of that period was "appointed to the general superintendence of the business of the Rājshāhi District." Mr. Dallas' allowances were Rs. 1,200 a month as Collector and Rs. 300 as house rent. He was also entitled to an allowance as a factor, but he reported that he did not know the amount as he had never yet drawn it. Mr. Dallas resigned in January 1786 and was succeeded by Mr. Peter Speke, who next year was also made Judge and Magistrate. As Judge, Collector and District Magistrate he received pay of Rs. 1,500 a month and an allowance for house rent. He had two assistants. The first assistant, Mr. Michael Atkinson, had a pay of Rs. 500 and the second assistant, Mr. Hawkins, Rs. 400 a month, neither having allowances of any kind. There was no Civil Surgeon, but in 1787 an arrangement was made for the Civil Surgeon at Cossimbazar to attend and do duty occasionally at Nātor, then the head-quarters: in consideration of this extra work the Civil Surgeon's pay was raised from Rs. 300 to 400 a month.

In addition to his pay, the Collector was given a commission on revenue collections, namely, Rs. 6,000 when they were under six lakhs, Rs. 7,000 when they were from seven to eight lakhs, and so on in a rising scale till the collections amounted to 9 lakhs but were below 10 lakhs. When the collections aggregated 10 lakhs, the Collector became entitled to a commission of Rs. 10,000. After that the commission was 1 per cent. for the first 10 lakhs and one and a half per cent. on the remainder. The amount drawn by way of commission must have been considerable, for the average realisations amounted to 21 lakhs, on which the annual commission would be Rs. 25,500. Tho collections of revenue, it may be added, had previously come to a much higher figure, viz., 27 lakhs from 1766 to 1770. The decrease in subsequent years was attributed in part "to the general calamity of the famine in 1769 and 1770."

Punctual submission of the tauzi accounts was insisted upon. In 1783 the Collector was warned that he would be liable to immediate dismissal if he failed to send the tauzi accounts for each month by the 15th of the next month; but three years later this drastic order was modified. It was then laid down that if the accounts were not received by the due date, the Collector would have to pay a fine not exceeding half a month's pay for the first offence and the whole month's pay for a second or later instance of unpunctuality. Mr. Peter Speke had the ill fortune to be fined on one occasion for such unpunctuality, the fine being Rs. 300, which was recovered from his next month's pay. Mr. Speke was succeeded in 1789 by Mr. Tilman Henckell, who is better known for his work in the Sundarbans when Collector of Jessore.

The records of these early times are full of two classes of complaints, the one referring to constant arrears of revenue, the other to the general disturbed condition of the country and armed disorders. Besides having to deal with these, the Collector had to look after the silk trade. In 1787, for instance, Mr. Speke was given Rs. 31,000 for investment in silk on account of the East India Company. As Commercial Resident at Boalia, he was also given an allotment of Rs. 75,000 (in the same year) as "advances for the raw silk investments," which was half the amount given to Cossimbazar. Next year a package of China white silk-worm eggs was sent to Mr. Speke by the Board of Revenue with the request that "from his distinguished knowledgo in this important branch he would use his best endeavours to attempt the rearing of the insects

with a view of introducing the production of the China white silk within the Company's provinces."

It is impossible not to be struck by the lawlessness of the remoter parts of the great territory under the Collector's authority during the early days of British rule. This was partly a legacy from the dire famine of 1769-70 when the starving people in despair sought to appease their hunger by plunder. In April 1771 for instance the Supervisor of Rājshāhi reported "the frequent firing of villages by the people, whose distress drive them to such acts of despair and villainy. Numbers of ryots, who have hitherto borne the first of characters among their neighbours, pursue this last resource to procure themselves a subsistence." "A set of lawless banditti" wrote the Council in 1773, "known under the name of Sanyasis or Faquirs, "have long infested these countries; and, under pretence of religious pilgrimage, have been accustomed to traverse the chief part of Bengal, begging, stealing, and plundering wherever they go, and as it best suits their convenience to practise."* In the years subsequent to the famine, their ranks were swollen by a crowd of starving peasants, who had neither seed nor implements to recommence cultivation with, and the cold weather of 1772 brought them down upon the harvest fields of Bengal, burning, plundering, ravaging, 'in bodies of fifty thousand men.'†

Lawless
ness of the
country.

The dacoits, as we should now call them, long lingered in parganas Bhitband and Swarūppur, two outlying portions of the Nātor or Rājshāhi Zamindari, which were under the Collector of Rājshāhi and were not transferred to Rangpur till after the Permanent Settlement. They lay on the road between Rangpur and Dinājpur and were an Alsatia for evil-doers. In 1784 we find that Swarūppur was infested by a 'herd of dacoits' who had carried off 600 women and hanged a fakir who dared to complain against them. Ensign Duncanson was despatched against them and defeated them and rescued many of their captives. "The no-man's land," writes Mr. Glazier, "lying south of the stations of Dinajpur and Rungpore, and west of the present Bograh, towards the Ganges, far removed from any local authority, was a favourite haunt of the banditti. In 1787, Lieutenant Brenan was employed against a noted dacoit

* Letter from the President and Council (Secret Department) to the Court of Directors, dated 15th January 1773.

† From the same to the same, dated 1st March 1773, I. c. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal* (1868), pp. 70-1.

leader, Bhawani Pattuck, in this quarter. He despatched a havildar with twenty-four sepoy in search of the robbers, and they surprised Pattuck with sixty of his followers in their boats. Pattuck's chief man, a Pathan, headed a desperate resistance, during which the Pathan, Pattuck himself, and two other headmen were killed, and eight were wounded, besides forty-two taken prisoners. Of the attacking party, two sepoy only were wounded. Seven boats, with arms, accoutrements, and ammunition, as the Lieutenant expresses it, were taken. Pattuck's force consisted wholly of up-countrymen : he himself was a native of Budgepore, and he was in league with another noted dacoit, Manjoo Shaha, who made yearly raids from the southern side of the Ganges. We just catch a glimpse from the Lieutenant's report of a female dacoit, by name Devi Chandhranee, also in league with Pattuck, who lived in boats, had a large force of burkundazes in her pay, and committed dacoities on her own account, besides getting a share of the booty obtained by Pattuck. Her title of Chandhranee would imply that she was a zamindar, probably a petty one, else she need not have lived in boats for fear of capture.

"Brenan observes as follows on the complicity of the zamindars with these dacoits, and closes with some very pertinent remarks :—' I did not imagine that it was a matter of any importance to know that the principal zamindars in most parts of these districts, and I believe, I may venture to add, in most parts of the country too, have always a banditti ready to let loose on such of their unfortunate neighbours as have any property worth seizing on, and in accomplishing which even the lives of the unhappy sufferers are seldom spared. The zamindars commit these outrages in the most perfect security, as there is no reward offered to detect them ; and from the nature of independence of the dacoits on them it cannot be effected without bribery.' " *

A similar state of disorder prevailed in the country to the east in what is now the district of Bogra. Here a dacoit named Majnu Fakir terrorized the country. His favourite mode of proceeding was to set fire to a village in the middle of the day and then plunder it. His followers were armed with fire-arms, which they freely used. In 1777 a body of Nāgas, a caste of up-country religious fanatics, to the number of two hundred, came and fell upon the dacoits. They are said to have been well mounted on large horses and to have been armed with

* E. G. Glazier, *Report on the District of Rungpore* (1873), pp. 41-42.

long swords. They and the followers of Majnu Fakir met in battle at daybreak and fought till noon, when only the infant son of the leader of the robber gang survived on the side of the dacoits. The swords of the Nāgas are described as lopping off the heads of the robbers with as much ease as if they were cutting the stalks of plantain-trees!

Twenty or thirty years later another famous dacoit, Pandit Shāh, plundered when and where he pleased under the patronage of the zamindar, Anūp Nārāyan, who had originally been a clerk in the Raja of Nātor's office. He was at last captured in 1812 and sent for trial to the Magistrate of Rājshāhi, who sentenced him to transportation for life. Anūp Nārāyan's connection with Pandit Shāh was discovered, and he and his brother were imprisoned in the Nātor jail for nine years. He is said to have had a very easy life in prison, and to have bribed so profusely that he was able to go home at the time of his mother's death, and perform her *srāddha* with great display. After that he returned to jail, and completed his full term of imprisonment.

The disturbed state of this part of the country in the first quarter of the nineteenth century is graphically described by Mr. E Strachey, 3rd Judge of Circuit, in a letter addressed by him in 1808 to the Nizamāt Adalat at Murshidabad, from which the following extract is made :—

“ That dacoity is very prevalent in Rājshāhi has been often stated, but if its vast extent were known, if the scenes of horror, the murders, the burnings, the excessive cruelties, which are continually perpetrated here, were properly represented to Government, I am confident that some measures would be adopted to remedy the evil. Certainly there is not an individual belonging to the Government who does not anxiously wish to save the people from robbery and massacre, yet the situation of the people is not sufficiently attended to. It cannot be denied that, in point of fact, there is no protection for persons or property, and that the present wretched, mechanical, inefficient system of police is a mere mockery. The dacoits know much better than we how to preserve their power ; they have, with great success, established a respect for their order by speedy, certain, and severe punishments, and by judicious arrangements for removing obstacles, and for facilitating the execution of their wishes.”

The Judge then goes on to say : “ On my way through the northern part of this zilla, I had some conversation with a zamindar and a police daroga, who have distinguished themselves

by their exertions to apprehend dacoits. They told me that it was impossible to get any information about the great dacoits, but the houses of all the principal inhabitants were open to them; yet no body dared mention their names for fear of being murdered. They attributed the success of the dacoits to the same cause that everybody else does; namely, the protection given them by the zamindars and police officers, and other people of power and influence in the country. Everything I hear and see, and read on this subject, serves to convince me of the truth of this statement."

Police
adminis-
tration.

The country until 1793 was policed by the zamindars themselves, and the system afforded little protection to the ordinary cultivators. At the time of the Decennial Settlement in 1790, an allowance of (sikka) Rs. 36,926 was made to the zamindar, Rāja Rām Krishna of Nātor for police purposes; but the greater part of this sum went towards providing guards for the zamindar's revenue courts (*kachāris*), and escorts for his treasure. Only (sikka) Rs. 16,000 appear to have been devoted to maintaining police for the general peace of the district. No information exists showing the details of this force, but it is on record that twelve patrol boats were maintained on the various rivers to protect the country from dacoits and armed *fakirs*, who were very troublesome. The criminal police were employed in patrolling the towns and market places, in guarding the jails and police-stations, in escorting prisoners, and in serving and enforcing warrants and law processes. They also manned the patrol boats. In 1793 the supervision and maintenance of this branch of the police were taken away from the zamindar, and made over exclusively to the Collector, the zamindar being called on to contribute a certain proportion of the cost, and the remainder provided by the levy of a police tax on the towns and markets. In 1801-02 the district was partially guarded by a *sibandi* corps or militia police, consisting of 2 jamadārs, 4 havildārs, 4 naiks and 100 sepoy. The ordinary district police were distributed over twenty-seven police circles or thanas at a cost of (sikka) Rs. 35,604.

FORMA-
TION OF
THE DIS-
TRICT.

Up to the time of the Permanent Settlement in 1793, Rājshāhi formed the largest and one of the most important administrative divisions of Bengal. It can scarcely be called a district, for it corresponded with the great zamindari of Rājshāhi, which was estimated in 1786 to comprise an area of 12,909 square miles; in other words, it was about five times the size of the present district. On the north of the Ganges is included the greater portion of what are now the districts of

Rājshāhi, Mālda, Bogra and Pābna ; on the south it included a large and important subdivision called Nij Chakla Rājshāhi, which stretched across the districts of Murshidābād, Nadia and Jessore as far as the borders of Bīrblūm and Burdwān. At the same time, however, the *parganas* of Lashkarpur and Tāhirpur, which are now part of Rājshāhi, were comprised within the Murshidābād district. So extensive was this territory that it was found impossible for it to be administered efficiently by a single Collector with two Assistants, one stationed at Murād-bāgh in Murshidābād and the other at the local head-quarters of Nātor.

The first change took place in 1793, when a general redistribution of Bengal into districts was made by the Government. The extensive tract lying south of the Ganges was then taken from the parent district and divided among the adjoining jurisdictions of Murshidābād, Nadia and Jessore. This transfer left to Rājshāhi the irregular triangle lying at the confluence of the Ganges and Brahmaputra with those two rivers as its natural boundaries. But the prevalence of crime in the remoter parts of the district made further reductions necessary. It was realized that the Collector of Rājshāhi was unable to exercise proper control over the most distant parts of his jurisdiction and that the district was too large for one central authority. Accordingly in March 1813 the thanas of Rohanpur and Chāmpai were separated from Rājshāhi, and, together with others from Dinājpur and Purnea, were formed into the present district of Mālda. About the year 1821 four thanas, viz., Adamdighi, Naokila, Sherpur and Bogra, were separated from Rājshāhi, and, together with two thanas from Rangpur and three from Dinājpur, formed into the present district of Bogra. Again in 1832 the district of Pābna was constituted in a similar way by the separation of the five thanas of Shāhzādpur, Khetupāra, Raiganj Mathura and Pābna from Rājshāhi, and of four others from Jessore.

There have been other changes of minor importance, but the only extensive transfers in recent years have been (1) the transfer to Nadia between 1881 and 1891 of Marichar Diār, a *char* tract with an area of 16½ square miles, and (2) the transfer to Rājshāhi in 1896-97 of the Mahābedpur thana from Dinājpur and of portions of the Adamdighi and Nawābganj thanas of Bogra. The object of these last transfers was to bring the whole area growing *gānja* under one jurisdiction.

The head-quarters of the district were at Nātor until 1825 when they were transferred to Rāmpur Boālia on account of the unhealthiness of Nātor. The subdivision of Nātor was

then formed; and the Naogaon subdivision was created in 1877.

**THE
MUTINY.**

There was no internal disturbance in the district during the Mutiny. A small force, composed of civil officers and of the Europeans employed in the factories of Messrs. Robert Watson & Co., was raised in order to deal with any emergency. This force succeeded in surprising a small body of mutineers, who had crossed the Ganges from Murshidābād and camped on the road between Rāmpur Boālia and Sardah. It was a bloodless encounter, for the mutineers had their horses picketed out and were cooking their food. The Europeans dashed on them, cutting them off from their horses, and the mutineers surrendered without striking a blow.

According to an amusing story still told by old residents, blood was only drawn once, and then by accident. One of the troopers was practising sword manual exercise at the Bara Kothi in Rāmpur Boālia, when an old *khansāmāh* brought in *chola hāzari* and, without looking to see where he was going, blundered into the sweep of the warrior's sword and received a cut on the arm.

The services of the Europeans was acknowledged as follows in the Lieutenant-Governor's (Sir F. Halliday) Final Minute on the Mutiny: "Early in September an offer made by the Manager of Messrs. Robert Watson & Co.'s factories to raise a small force of European Volunteer Cavalry for service, in case of need, was accepted with thanks. A small but very effective body, consisting of indigo planters and civil officers, has since been raised and organised at Rāmpur Boālia, and an officer deputed to superintend their drill, etc." In 1860-61, when the Volunteer movement was started in India, the same men formed a corps under the designation of the Rājshāhi Cavalry Volunteer Corps. This corps was comprised of 40 effective men, and was one of the first five Volunteer Corps in Bengal.

**ARCHÆO-
LOGY.**

Many fine specimens of sculpture have been discovered in the district by the Varendra Research Society, and may be seen in the Public Library at Rāmpur Boālia. A few are Buddhist, the finest being a severely simple but impressive statue of Buddha clothed in a long robe, which is ascribed to the period of the Gupta Empire, *i.e.*, the fourth and fifth centuries, A.D. There is also a Jain image of Sāntinātha, the sixteenth Tīrthānkara of the Jains, which was unearthed at Mandail in this district. The majority of the sculptures are of a later period (800—1200 A.D.) and were executed when the country was ruled over by the Pālas and Senas. As stated

above, two great artists and sculptors, Dhīmān and Vitapāla, flourished in Varendra under the Pālas and acquired great fame as sculptors. No building of the Pāla age is still standing—some are buried in great mounds—but there are many large tanks which testify to the munificence either of these kings or of their subjects. In the eleventh century the Pālas were devoted to the Tāntric forms of Buddhism, and the Hinduism of Ballāl Sen was also of a Tāntric kind. These influences are reflected in the statuary still extant.

In this district there are two monuments of real architectural merit erected during the period of Muhammadan domination, viz., the mosque at Kusumba and the mosque at Bīgha, of which a description will be found in the articles on those places in the last chapter.

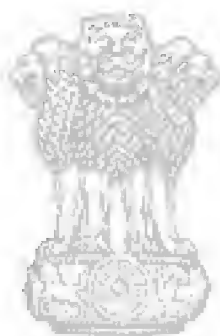
Perhaps the most remarkable monument of more recent times is a large embankment called Rani Bhawānī's Jāngāl, which is said to have been constructed by the famous Rani Bhawānī of Nātor. This embankment, which has the remains of masonry bridges and is big enough to carry a railway line, stretches from a point a little north of Chaugrām in Singra thana away to Bhawānīpur, a place of pilgrimage in Pābna, its object being to enable pilgrims to travel to the shrine on foot when the country is under water.

The most promising field for archaeological research is the Barind, where most of the mediæval sculptures have been found. Remains of the past, such as the ruins of buildings and traces of roads, point to an old civilisation in this tract. One remarkable feature is the number and size of old tanks which are scattered over this area. There are two classes of tanks, which perhaps represent two distinct settlements. The older and larger tanks are rectangular in shape, the longest sides running north and south, and probably represent an ancient Hindu civilisation. The second series of tanks are square, or have their longest sides running east and west, and probably represent a more recent Muhammadan colonization.

The history of this interesting tract is still unknown. It seems certain that it was once a thriving country and inhabited by a highly developed race. It is only in recent times that its fertile fields have attracted vigorous cultivators from outside Bengal who have reclaimed the waste. The question why the Barind lay so long neglected has yet to be solved, but the main facts are clearly stated in the following extract from an article by Mr. F. J. Monahan, late Commissioner of the Rājshāhi Division :—"There is evidence that the tract was

once densely populated—it probably was so at a time when the adjacent stretches of more recent alluvium had not risen high enough to be fit for habitation. In later times, owing to causes not ascertained, the Barind became depopulated, overgrown with forest and unhealthy, while population flocked into the lower alluvial areas adjoining, as these rose higher and became cultivable and habitable."

* *Varendra*, J. R. A. S., January 1914 p. 98.



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

SINCE 1872, when the first census was taken, the population

| Year of census. | Population. | Increase or decrease per cent. |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1872 ... | 1,421,865 | ... |
| 1881 ... | 1,449,033 | + 1·9 |
| 1891 ... | 1,437,859 | - 0·8 |
| 1901 ... | 1,460,584 | + 1·6 |
| 1911 ... | 1,460,587 | + 1·4 |

of Rājshāhi has increased by only 58,722. No district in Bengal has such a bad record, except Burdwan and Hooghly, the former of which has a gain of only 52,000, while the latter has sustained a loss of 29,000.

GROWTH
OF
POPULA-
TION.

While Rājshāhi has made practically no advance, the increase

in other districts of North Bengal during the same period has varied from 170,000 in Darjeeling to nearly half a million in Jalpaiguri.

Between 1872 and 1891 the thanas to the north and west increased rapidly in population, but those in the centre and south declined. The result was that the district as a whole was almost stationary, but in the next decade there was an increase of 1·6 per cent. Up till 1901 the central and southern thanas sustained a loss of 12·8 per cent. owing to the ravages of malaria; on the other hand, the population increased by 25·6 per cent. in the Bariud, and by 59·3 per cent. in the fertile thanas of Naogāon and Pānchupur in the Naogāon subdivision.

During the last decade (1901-11) fever continued unabated, and the reported births exceeded the deaths by only 31,266. The actual increase of the population according to the census is 20,000 or 1·4 per cent. only, a result which is practically unaffected by variations in the number of immigrants and emigrants since 1901. Small as the increase is, it is mainly attributable to the greater fecundity of the Muhammadans, who have increased by 13,000, whereas the Hindus have decreased by 10,000 or nearly 3 per cent.

The deterioration of the Nātor subdivision, which is the chief centre of malaria, has continued, and a further loss of 7 per cent. is now recorded. Singra (a portion of which lies in

the Barind) is, as in 1901, the only thana in the subdivision that has gained population, but the gain is under 1½ per cent. The Sadar subdivision has a slight growth of 1½ per cent. The most progressive thana in this subdivision, or indeed in the whole district, is Godāgāri, which lies within the Barind, and has added 17 per cent. to its numbers. Elsewhere, there has been a small increase of 3½ to 4½ per cent., but Puthia and Chārgḥāt have again decreased. The Naogāon subdivision, where two thanas (Mānda and Mahādebpur) lie in the Barind, is by far the most progressive part of the district, all its thanas contributing to the increase. It is now more populous by 22 per cent. than it was in 1891, whereas the Sadar subdivision has remained practically stationary, the increase at this census not having made up entirely for the loss in 1901. The Nātor subdivision is steadily declining and has lost 11 per cent. of its population in the last 20 years.

The table below shows the thana variations :—

| RĀJSHĀHI. | POPULATION. | PERCENTAGE OF VARIATION. | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------|
| | | 1901-1911. | 1891-1901. |
| <i>District Total</i> ... | 1,150,557 | + 1·37 | + 1·58 |
| <i>Sadar Subdivision</i> ... | 504,224 | + 1·41 | + 1·27 |
| Boālia ... | 98,628 | + 3·49 | - 3·87 |
| Tānor ... | 92,398 | + 4·37 | + 1·77 |
| Godāgāri ... | 55,097 | + 17·06 | + 1·28 |
| Puthia ... | 86,362 | - 6·46 | - 3·57 |
| Chārgḥāt ... | 102,612 | - 6·26 | - 5·82 |
| Bāgmāra ... | 129,127 | + 4·38 | + 3·95 |
| <i>Naogāon Subdivision</i> ... | 517,405 | + 8·91 | + 12·13 |
| Naogāon ... | 187,291 | + 10·52 | + 14·23 |
| Mānda ... | 135,738 | + 7·66 | + 10·81 |
| Mahādebpur ... | 94,461 | + 12·90 | + 14·10 |
| Pānchupur ... | 99,915 | + 4·22 | + 8·67 |
| <i>Nātor Subdivision</i> ... | 398,953 | - 7·02 | - 4·76 |
| Nātor ... | 118,160 | - 12·53 | - 9·84 |
| Singra ... | 120,508 | + 0·48 | + 1·61 |
| Baraigrām ... | 98,963 | - 7·80 | - 6·77 |
| Lālpur ... | 61,327 | - 8·12 | - 1·28 |

Briefly, the district as a whole, which had an addition of only 1·6 per cent. in 1901, has a further small increase of 1·4

per cent. The greatest advance has been made in the *gānja* growing thanas in the Naogāon subdivision (13 and 14 per cent.) and in the Barind, where the percentage of increase varies from 4 to 17 per cent. The Nāogaon subdivision has developed rapidly, and the Sadar subdivision very slightly, but the Nātor subdivision, a swampy malarious area, is steadily declining.

The most progressive tracts are the Barind and the thanas of Naogāon and Pānchupur. The Barind has developed owing to the immigration of Santāls and other aboriginals, who find congenial employment in clearing it for cultivation, while the Naogāon subdivision has benefited by the movement of the inhabitants of unhealthy water-logged areas to the healthier and more prosperous thanas included in it. The Barind attracts immigrants from other districts and the Naogāon subdivision from other parts of Rājshāhi itself, chiefly Puthia, Bāgmāra and Nātor.

The average density of population is 566 per square mile. DENSITY
This relatively low density is due partly to the district containing a large portion of the Barind and partly to the presence of numerous marshes and swamps. There is, however, a belt of country running from north to south through the centre of the district, where the population is as great as in almost any part of North Bengal. The thanas in this belt are Boālia, with 808 to the square mile, Bāgmāra (909) and Naogāon (814). Bāgmāra has the highest density of any thana, and Godāgāri (334), which is all Barind country, the least. Singra, a large part of which also lies in the Barind, is very little more populous than Godāgāri, for it supports only 340 to the square mile.

Taking the subdivisions separately, the Sadar subdivision (631) is the most densely populated, but it is closely followed by the Naogāon subdivision, of which the population is increasing rapidly and has now attained a density of 602 to the square mile. In the Nātor subdivision density falls to 462 owing largely to the number of swamps it contains.

At the census of 1911 the number of immigrants in the district was 93,000 or 16,000 more than in 1901. It is MIGRA-
TION. uncertain how many of these are permanent settlers. A great many are earth-workers and field labourers, who visit the district during the cold weather and leave again before the rains set in. The great majority of the permanent settlers are Santāls, Mundas and Oraons, who have made clearances in the Barind. "The zamindars allow newly-cleared

land to be held rent-free for the first three or four years, and this exactly suits the taste of these unsophisticated aborigines, who do not mind the physical labour involved in breaking down the jungle, but have a very great aversion to the payment of rent. They remain until rent is demanded and then move on, leaving the land they have brought under cultivation to be occupied by the less hardy and less industrious Hindu cultivators who would shrink from undertaking on their own account the irksome task of reclamation.*" No less than 14,000 immigrants were born in the Santāl Parganas, an increase of 7,000 since 1901.

The number of emigrants, *i.e.*, of persons born in Rājshāhi, but enumerated outside its borders, has increased by 15,000 since 1901, and amounted to 39,000 in 1911. The actual percentage of emigrants to the district population is, however, under 3 per cent. and the following remarks recorded by the Collector in the District Census Report of 1891 are still as true as when they were written. "Owing to the fertility of the soil, the people of this district are not, so far as I can ascertain, driven to the necessity of seeking occupation elsewhere. Besides, they have a peculiar love of home, a love which has potent sway over them. Whereas I find, on the one hand, educated or semi-educated people hailing from advanced districts like Dacca, Hooghly and the 24-Parganas scattered all over Bengal, some of them, from their enterprising spirit and fondness for travel, being found in countries even so far removed from Bengal as Afghānistān in the west and Burma in the east seeking employment; and while, on the other hand, I note that the aborigines of the Chota Nāgpur Division and the semi-aborigines of Bīrbhūm and Bānkura swarm forth to Assam and Mauritius and other countries, impelled by sheer want, the people of Rājshāhi are steeped in lethargy, from which they cannot be awakened. They remain contented with their lot as they need not go away from their homes, even though their homes may be situated in a very hotbed of malaria. Beyond the precincts of the district they will not go, however bright and alluring may be the prospects held out to them. This disinclination for emigration is not confined to low class people but has thoroughly permeated the educated classes also. Amongst the clerks of my office, who are natives of this district, a transfer to another district with a vastly better climate and on promotion, is regarded with aversion."

* E. A. Gait, *Bengal Census Report of 1901*, Part I, p. 58.

Owing to these causes the balance of migration is in favour of Rājshāhi. It gains from all its neighbours except Dinājpur, but mainly on the south at the expense of Nadia and Murshidābād. There is, as already shown, a considerable amount of permanent migration to the Barind from the Santāl Parganas, Rānchi and Mānbhum, while the United Provinces and parts of Bihar supply a fair number of cold weather visitors in search of employment on roads and as tank diggers and labourers. A considerable percentage of these immigrants have accepted the posts of village chaukidārs and settled down permanently in the east of the district, being satisfied with a smaller income than the indigenous Bengali.

There are only two towns in the district, viz., Rāmpur Boālia with a population of 23,406 and Nātor with a population of 8,251. Both towns are still largely rural in character, including areas of cultivation as well as of jungle. In both towns the Hindus outnumber the Musalmāns, whereas in the rest of the district the reverse is the case. The rural population is no less than 98 per cent. of the total population of the district, there being 6,670 villages with average population of 217 persons. The majority of the villages are of small size: 6,106 have under 500 inhabitants, 477 have 500 to 1,000, 83 have 1,000 to 2,000, and only four have over 2,000; the average population of the four villages last mentioned is 2,200. One of the largest villages is Kalam on the border of the Chalan Bil; a popular saying is "If you want to see a village, go to Kalam; if you want to see a *bil*, go to the Chalan Bil."

TOWNS
AND
VILLAGES

It should be explained that for census purposes the village was taken to mean a residential village, *i.e.*, a collection of houses bearing a separate name with its dependent hamlets. The hamlet usually consists of scattered homesteads or *bāris*, separated from each other by cultivated land and jungle. Each homestead contains besides the actual buildings, a certain area of garden and cultivated land, the whole surrounded by a fence and sometimes by a ditch also.

Most of the villages are buried in a thick jungle of bamboos, trees and undergrowth. If on starting a new hamlet the people do not find trees available to build under, they plant them to afford privacy for their women, and shade and protection from storms for their frail tenements. The humidity of the atmosphere and the rich soil soon supply a flourishing crop of brushwood, grass and weeds. Holes are dug in all directions for earth to raise the houses. These, filled with water by the

first rains, supply each man with water at his door if he wishes it. They become silted up in the course of years and degenerate into pools of stagnant water coated over with thick green confervæ. The Bengali village is very unlike that of the Santāls. The latter select the highest and driest spot for their villages, and carefully cut and keep down the jungle in and about them, growing only a few useful trees either for shade or fruit. Each Santāl's house is a complete little farm enclosure, containing the owners' dwelling house, granary, cow house and pigsty.

RELIGI-
ONS.

Musalmāns largely predominate in the population, aggregating 1,148,314 or 78 per cent. of the total number; this is a higher proportion than in any district of North Bengal except Bogra. The Hindus, on the other hand, number only 315,640 or 21 per cent. of the total population; they are relatively most numerous in the Godāgāri thana, where they are only slightly outnumbered by the Musalmāns.

Animists.

There are altogether 16,195 Animists, all of whom are of aboriginal descent and mostly immigrants from the Santāl Parganas. Altogether 13,000 of the Animists are Santāls and 1,000 are Māl Pahāriās. There are also 11,000 Oraons, who were recorded at the census as Hindus, but who should almost certainly have been entered as Animists. Their claim to the title was probably based upon their own assertion alone, or upon the ignorance of the enumerators, and it is more than doubtful whether it was really justified. At all events, admitting that a certain number of these aborigines have adopted Hinduism, their religion is still in a very elementary stage, for they keep no Brahmans, eat pork and fowls, and are addicted to strong drink.

It may be explained that Animism is a term applied, for want of a better, to that amorphous form of religion of which the basis is "the belief which explains to primitive man the constant movements and changes in the world of things by the theory that every object which has activity enough to affect him in any way is animated by a life and will like his own."* It peoples the world with spirits, which have the power to influence man directly. They may be wandering spirits incapable of being represented by idols, or they may be resident in some object or body, either animate or inanimate: the latter becomes a 'fetish,' endowed with power to protect or injure man. According

* W. Crooke, *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1907), Vol. I, p. 431.

to Tiele, "the religions controlled by Animism are characterized first of all by a varied, confused and indeterminate doctrine, an unorganized polydæmonism, which does not, however, exclude the belief in a supreme spirit, though in practice this commonly bears but little fruit; and in the next place by magic, which but rarely rises to the level of real worship In the Animistic religions, fear is more powerful than any other feeling, such as gratitude or trust. The spirits and the worshippers are alike selfish. The evil spirits receive, as a rule, more homage than the good, the lower more than the higher, the local more than the general. The allotment of their rewards or punishments depends not on men's good or bad actions, but on the sacrifices and gifts which are offered to them or withheld."* The spirits are mostly malevolent, for the rude mind with difficulty associates the idea of power and benignity. Man lives surrounded by spirits inimical to his health and well-being, who must be periodically propitiated, either in order to ward off their hostility or to induce them to relinquish their victims. The Animist has consequently a firm belief in the functions and supernatural powers of sorcerers. The latter are not strictly priests, but merely diviners and exorcists: they do not form an organized order, nor is their function hereditary.

The Christian community is very small, having a total strength, according to the census figures, of only 323. The majority of the Indian Christians belong to the Presbyterian Church, which began mission work in Rāmpur Boālia in 1862. The first minister, the Rev. Bihārī Lāl Singh, opened schools and an orphanage, and gathered together a little congregation, and after him Dr. Morison carried on work, chiefly medical, till his death in 1900. The Mission maintains a girls' school and dispensary at Rāmpur Boālia and a well equipped dispensary and school at Naogāon. An Italian priest of the Roman Catholic Church, whose head-quarters are at Krishnagar, visits the district periodically and engages in itinerant preaching. His head-quarters during these visits is at Andarkutha, 1½ miles north of Kharchaka and 6 miles west of Rāmpur Boālia. Another Roman Catholic priest from Saidpur, a railway settlement in Rangpur, also occasionally visits places along the main line of the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

Nearly all the Musalmāns were returned at the census by the generic designation of Sheikh, the total number under this category being 1,100,000.

*Outlines of the History of Ancient Religions, p. 10.

Hindu
castes.

The most numerous Hindu caste is that of the Kaibarttas, who number 62,308 persons ; of these 57,085 are Chāsi Kaibarttas or Mahishya, while 5,223 are Jālia (Jele) Kaibarttas. The only other caste with a strength of over 25,000 is the Namasudra (25,971).

Brahmans.

Brahmans number 16,892 and are more numerous than in any district of North Bengal except Pābna. The majority of them are Vārendra Brahmans, who trace their origin to five priests brought from Kanauj by King Adisura. The tradition is that Adisura was anxious to perform a great sacrifice, and was under the necessity of importing five Brahmans from Kanauj or Oudh, in order that the ceremony might be properly conducted. Their usual family names are Bāgchi, Bhāduri, Lāhiri, Maitra and Sānyāl. These surnames are peculiar to the Vārendras, but they have also among them Bhattachāryas, Majumdārs, Joādārs, Rāys, Achāryas, Chakravarttis, Adhikāris and Chaudhuris.

In addition to the usual hypergamous divisions of Kulīn Srotriya, there is a section called Kāp, which is said to have its origin in this district. The following story is told about it in J. N. Bhattacharya's *Hindu Castes and Sects*.

"It is said that the Kāps are the descendants of a great Kulīn named Madhu Maitra by his first wife. Madhu was an inhabitant of a village on the river Atrai, situated near the place where it is now crossed by the Eastern Bengal State Railway. An inferior member of the clan, being treated at a dinner party of his castemen with great contumely, determined to form a matrimonial alliance with the great Kulīn at any cost, and with that object hired a boat to take him to the vicinity of Madhu's residence and was careful to have with him on board the vessel his wife, an unmarried daughter and a cow. On reaching the neighbourhood of Madhu's village, he enquired of a Brahman, who was saying his prayers after performing his ablutions on the banks of the river, whether he knew where the great head of the Vārendra clan lived. The Brahman, who was interrogated, was himself the person about whom the enquiry was addressed. When the fact was made known to the Brahman on board the boat, he produced a hammer and a chisel threatening to sink the boat with all its inmates unless Madhu agreed to marry the Brahman's daughter. The old man was too far advanced in life to be quite ready for complying with any request of the kind. But as an orthodox Hindu, he could not take upon himself any share of the three great crimes, namely, the killing of a

female, the killing of a Brahman, and the killing of a cow, which were threatened to be perpetrated in his presence. So he reluctantly gave his consent. But when his sons came to know what he was going to do, they were very much annoyed, and they separated from the father at once. The old man was supported by his sister's husband, who was then the other great Kulīn of the caste, and the sons, who separated, became Kāps. The position of their descendants is superior to that of Srotriyas, but inferior to that of the Kulīns. Matrimonial alliance between a Kulīn and Kāp reduces the former to the position of the latter."

To this legend it may be added that all the Kāps are not descendants of one family. There are Kāps among the Maitras, as well as among Bāgchis, Bhāduris, Lahiris and Sanyāls. It seems certain that other Kulīns became Kāps by intermarriage with the original Kāp family and their descendants.

There are many large zamindars among the Vārendra Brahmans, the most ancient being the Tahirpur Rāj, but perhaps the most famous is the house of Nātor, once the largest landholders in Bengal. Inferior in importance, but more ancient than the Nātor family, is that of the Puthia zamindars. The late Maharani Sarat Sundari, "whose name", says the author of *Hindu Castes and Sects*, "is venerated throughout India for her extensive charities, and for her character as a model Hindu widow," was a member of the Puthia house. Among the other great Vārendra landholders of Bengal are the zamindars of Susang and Muktagāchha in the district of Mymensingh. In this district the Vārendra Brahmans take the lead in social and civic movements. They also lead in education, but have not come to the front so much as the Brahmans and Kayasths elsewhere owing to the munificence of Rāni Bhawāni of Nātor, who created so many *brahmottars* that the Brahmans have not been impelled by need to seek for employment. So numerous are the *brahmottars* that it is said that a Brahman without a *brahmottar* is no true Brahman.

Among the lower castes the old system of self-government still has considerable vitality. The members of the caste themselves adjudicate upon matters affecting the purity or solidarity of the caste, and inflict punishments upon fellow members who are proved guilty of offences against the caste laws. The sentence is passed either by a general meeting of the castemen, or is the decree of a small committee of the elders, a kind of governing body: this is called *pāñchāyat*

CASTE
GOVERN-
MENT.

among the Hindus and *majlis* among the Muhammadans. Their ultimate sanction is expulsion from the community, which naturally depends on the unanimous consent of all belonging to it. They deal mainly with such matters as the breach of caste rules regarding eating, drinking and marriage, or the adoption of some occupation which is looked upon as degrading. They also uphold discipline in the caste, punishing such offences as abusing a Mandal and even mutual abuse among relatives; cases are also reported of their effecting family partitions. As a rule, the caste councils deal with individual offences already committed and do not prescribe rules for future conduct. They are tribunals rather than legislative assemblies, but to some extent they have legislative power laying down, for instance, when a caste is trying to raise its social status, that the members are not to follow certain occupations, *e.g.*, selling fish or serving members of other castes (except Brahmans) as menials.

The following sketch of the system as still in force among a few of the castes of this district sufficiently explains the general organization and methods of procedure.

Baishnab.

The Baishnabs acknowledge the jurisdiction of a Gosain, who takes cognizance of breaches of caste customs. His post is hereditary: when a Gosain dies leaving no heir, his successor is elected. The offences of which he generally takes cognizance are the eating of forbidden food, the drinking of wine and immoral acts. In most cases the offender is warned, but in serious cases fines varying from Re. 1 to Rs. 5 are imposed. These are spent in giving feasts and providing funds for *Harirlāl*, *i.e.*, a meeting of the members of the caste at night, when they sing songs in praise of Hari and distribute sweets. The Gosain takes action on the complaint of the aggrieved party and also of his own motion. When an offender proves contumacious, he is outcasted.

Kaibartta.

The governing body of the Kaibarttas consists of 2 to 4 members, who are called *Parāmāniks* or *Pradhāns*. Their posts are hereditary; if a member of the body is a minor, his guardian acts for him. When a member dies without an heir, the men of the caste appoint a member in his place. The *Parāmāniks* take cognizance of breaches of moral rules and social offences, such as adultery, having a daughter unmarried after she is 11 years of age, and taking back into the family a woman who has eloped. In trivial cases, the offender is warned; in serious cases he is fined. The fines are spent in feasts and charity. Any culprit who proves contumacious

is outcasted. The Parāmāniks take action on the complaint of the aggrieved party and also of their own motion.

The governing body of the Muchis consists of two members Muchi. called Mandals, who are elected. Each settlement of Muchis has got its Mandals. They take cognizance of petty cases of assault and adultery. The offender is fined up to Rs. 15. The fines realized are spent in feasts, in acts of charity, and on the purchase of mats for the use of the Mandals and others at their meeting place. An offender who proves contumacious is outcasted.

There are three sub-castes of Namasudras, viz., (i) Hālia Nama-
sudra. Namasudras, who are cultivators, (ii) Jālia Namasudras, who are fishermen, and (iii) Karāti, who are sawyers. The people of these sub-castes can eat together and smoke the same *hookah*, but there can be no intermarriage between them. There is in each village a governing body of each sub-caste, the members of which are called Parāmāniks: their number varies from two or seven. The post of Parāmānik is hereditary. If a Parāmānik is unfit for the post or dies without an heir, the men of the sub-caste elect his successor. The Parāmāniks take cognizance of petty cases of fraud and assault, breaches of moral rules, cases of elopement and violation of the established customs of the caste. If the offence is slight, the offender is warned. In serious cases he is fined from Re. 1 to Rs. 5. The fines are allowed to accumulate and, when the aggregate is enough, are spent in feasts, religious ceremonies and acts of charity. The contumacious are outcasted. As an instance of the jurisdiction exercised, a man in the Boālia thana entered another man's house in order to carry on an intrigue with a woman. He was fined Rs. 5 by the Parāmāniks. Two women of the same village quarrelled, and not only used filthy language to each other, but also accused each other's family of scandalous offences. The Parāmāniks fined them Re. 1-4 each. Action is taken by the Parāmāniks on the complaint of the aggrieved party and also of their own motion. In thana Mānda in the Naogāon subdivision there is only one Parāmānik for the village or group of villages.

There is no governing body of the Rājbanis but an adjudicator called Mandal, who is elected by the people of the village. Breaches of moral rules and social offences are dealt with by him. The offender is warned, and no fines are imposed. In the case of a woman eloping, she is given over to her seducer on his paying the marriage expenses of her husband Rājbanis.

and feasting the members of the caste. Contumacious culprits are outcasted.

In the Naogāon subdivision, where the Rājbanis are strongest, the members of the governing body are called Parāmāniks. Offenders are fined or ordered to give feasts. The fines are spent in helping *fakīrs* and the poor and in giving feasts. The Paliya sub-caste has Parāmāniks in each village, who are elected.

Dhāwa.

The members of the governing body of the Muhammadan functional group of Dhāwas are called Pradhāns or Parāmāniks. They are elected. Each village has got its Pradhāns or Parāmāniks. They take cognizance of social offences and breaches of moral rules. An offender is either fined or ordered to give a feast, but in trivial cases he is simply warned. The contumacious are outcasted. The Parāmāniks take action on the complaint of the aggrieved party and sometimes of their own motion. As an instance of their exercise of power, a woman in the Tānor thana left her home and became a prostitute; her mother, who used to pay her visits, was fined Re. 1-4 by the Parāmāniks for doing so. A man in the same thana, who did not maintain his wife, was fined Re. 1-4 and ordered to maintain her.

Jolaha.

Among the Jolahas (Jolas in Bengali) there is a Mandal in each village. He calls a meeting of the elders of the village, who decide the guilt or innocence of the person charged with an offence. The Mandal himself passes sentence. The elders and the Mandal take cognizance of breaches of moral laws, social offences, petty civil and criminal cases, and irreligious conduct, such as not saying prayers in the mosque. Sometimes the Mandal takes action of his own motion, but more generally he acts on complaints received. Offenders are fined, the fines varying from 5 annas to Rs. 2-8; the fines are spent in feasts. The contumacious are outcasted. In the Naogāon subdivision there are Pradhāns in each village, who form the governing body.

Kulu.

The members of the governing body of the Kulus are called Mandals. Their number may be one, two or three. The post is hereditary. The Mandals take cognizance of breaches of moral rules, social offences and cases in which men take up degrading occupations. The offender is usually fined; the fines are spent in feasts. The contumacious are outcasted, *e.g.*, a Kulu, who was a drunkard and a debauchee, was excommunicated as he proved contumacious. In the Naogāon subdivision the members of the governing body are called Pradhāns.

The members of the governing body of the Sheikhs are called Mandals or Pradhāns. Each village has got its Mandals or Pradhāns. Their number is two or three. The post is hereditary. When a member dies without an heir, his successor is elected by the people of the caste. The Mandals take cognizance of breaches of moral rules and social offences. The offender is fined, the amount of the fines vary from 1 anna 3 pies to Re. 1-4. The fines realised are spent in feasts, purchase of mats for the use of the Mandals, and the repair of the village mosque.

The educated Muhammadans of Rājshāhi are Hānafis, while the uneducated masses mostly belong to the modern puritanical sects called variously Wahābi, La-Mazhabi, Rafiyadain, etc. The meaning of these terms is explained in the following extract from Mr. Gait's Bengal Census Report of 1901 :—

MUHAM-
MADAN
SECTS.

“The two main sects of Muhammadans are, of course, the Sunnis and the Shiah. The former accept the authority of all the successors of Muhammad, whereas the Shiah look upon the first three, Abu Bakar, Omar and Osmān, as interlopers and regard Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, as the first true Khalifa. They also greatly reverence his martyred sons, Hasan and Husain. It is known that, with the exception of those of Moghul origin, the great majority of Bengal Muhammadans consider themselves Sunnis, although at the same time they exalt Hasan and Husain and observe the Ramzān as strictly as the Shiah. The religious writings of the Sunnis consist not only of the Korān, but also of the Hadis or traditional sayings of Muhammad not embodied in the Korān. These are in themselves hard to understand, but there are four recognized glossographers, and the followers of their commentaries are called after them, being known, respectively, as Hānafi, Shāfai, Māliki and Hambali. The difference between these sects is very slight, but the main characteristic of the Hānafis, which is practically the only one known in Bengal, is that the traditions are freely interpreted in the light of analogical reasoning, whereas the others take their stand against any modification of the actual words of Muhammad. Some, who interpret the traditions for themselves, without following any particular Imām, call themselves Ahli Hadis, ‘people of the tradition’ or Ghair Mukallid, ‘those who do not wear the collar’ (of any Imām).

“In the seventeenth century a new sect of Muhammadan purists arose in Arabia, who rejected the glosses of the Imāms and denied the authority of the Sultan, made comparatively light

of the authority of Muhammad, forbade the offering of prayers to any prophet or saint, and insisted on the necessity for waging war against all infidels. They were called Wahābis after their founder Muhammad Wahāb of Nejd. Their doctrines were introduced into India by Saiad Ahmad Shāh of Rai Bareilli, who proclaimed a *Jihād* or holy war against the Sikhs in 1826, and founded the colony of fanatics on the North-West frontier. Saiad Ahmad and his disciple, Maulavi Muhammad Ismail, gained many converts who, in this province, made Patna their head-quarters, whence they went out emissaries to propagate their doctrines all over Bengal and Bihar.

“Before noticing them, however, we may refer to a movement, similar but independent, in East Bengal, which was originated by Hāji Shariat Ullah, the son of a Jolaha of Farīdpur, who returned about 1820 A.D., from Mecca, where he had been a disciple of the Wahābis, and disseminated the teachings of that sect in Farīdpur and Dacca. Amongst other things he prohibited the performance of Hindu rites and the joining in Hindu religious ceremonies, the preparation of *tāzias* (models of the tomb of Hasan and Husain) and the praying to *pīrs* (saints) and prophets. He also held that India was *Dāru-l-harb* (the mansion of war), where the observance of the Friday prayers is unlawful and the waging of war against infidels is a religious necessity. He gained many followers, chiefly amongst the lowest classes. His son, Dudhu Miyān, who succeeded him, was even more successful and acquired a paramount influence amongst the Muhammadan cultivators and craftsmen of Dacca, Backergunge, Farīdpur, Noākhāli and Pābna. He partitioned the country into circles and appointed an agent to each to keep his sect together. He endeavoured to force all Muhammadans to join him, and made a determined stand against the levy of illegal cesses by landlords, and especially against contributions to the idol of Durga. He made himself notorious for his high-handed proceedings, was repeatedly charged with criminal offences, and, on one occasion at least, was convicted. He died in 1860.

“Concurrently with this movement other reformers were spreading the doctrines of the Patna School, the most successful of whom was Maulāna Karāmat Ali of Jaunpur. He made two important modifications in the tenets of his leaders. In the first place he did not altogether reject the glosses on the Hadis. He recognised that there were imperfections and contradictions, but he held that they were not sufficient to justify the formation of a new sect. Consequently, he and his followers

are generally regarded as belonging to the Hānafi sect. Secondly, in his later years at least, he declared that India under English rule was not *Dāru-l-harb*, and consequently that infidels are not here a legitimate object of attack and the Friday prayers are lawful. He strongly denounced the various Hindu superstitions common amongst the people, and especially the offering of *shirnis* or cakes to the spirits of ancestors on the *Shab-i-hurāt*. He also prohibited the use of music and the preparation of *tāzias*. On the other hand, he held that holy *pīrs* possessed a limited power of intercession with God and encouraged the making of offerings at their tombs. Karāmat Ali died in 1874. His mission was ably carried on by his son Hāfiz Ahmad, who preached all over East and North Bengal and died only about three years ago.

"These two reformed sects are collectively known as *Farāzi*, 'followers of the law,' *Namāz Hāfiz*, 'One who remembers his prayers,' *Hedāyati*, 'guides to salvation' or *Shāra*, 'followers of the precepts of Muhammad' as distinguished from *Sābiki*, 'old,' *Berabi*, 'without a guide,' *Bedaiyati* or *Beshāra*, by which terms the unreformed Muhammadans are generally known. The distinctive name of the followers of Karāmat Ali and his successors is *Ta'aiyuni*, 'those who appoint,' from their practice of appointing from their number a leader who decides religious questions and takes the place of a Kāzi thereby making the observance of the Friday prayers lawful. The followers of Dudhu Miyān are called Wahābis by the Ta'aiyunis, but the name is held in bad odour, and they themselves prefer the appellations of *Muhammadi*, *Ahl-i-hadis* or *Raḥ-yadain*, the last name being given with reference to their practice of raising their hands to their ears when praying, whereas the ordinary Sunnis fold their arms in front and the Shiahhs allow them to hang down. They are also sometimes called Amini, because they pronounce Amen in a loud voice like the Shāfai sect, and not in an undertone like the followers of Abu Hānifa. *La-Mazhabi*, 'no doctrine,' is another designation given them, because they reject all doctrines except those contained in the Korān."

These reformed sects have made considerable progress during the last generation. Writing in 1891 the Collector remarked: "The Hidāyati sect appears to have made amazing progress in this district within the last decade. The Hidāyatīs are a progressive class of Muhammadans, who are very strict, whereas the Behedāyatīs belong to the conservative class. In dress the distinction between the adherents of these two

different sects lies in the Behedāyatis putting on *kācha*. There are other distinctions, but this is not the place to dilate on them. In short, it may be said that the precepts inculcated by the Hedāyatis are almost identical with those taught by the Wahābis."

An infinitesimal fraction of the Musalmāns of Rājshāhi are Ahmadias, *i.e.* they have adopted the new cult of Mirza Ghulām Ahmad of Kadiān (in the Punjab). An account of this cult will be found on pages 249-51 of the Census Report of 1911 for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim. Briefly, it may be said that Mirza Ghulām professed to be the Imām Mehdi and the Massih or Messiah, and that his followers believe him to be such. Mirza Ghulām died about 7 years ago and the present Khalīfa (his successor) has published a pamphlet in various languages, including Bengali, in which he asks the Muhammadan world to recognise Mirza Ghulām as Imām Mehdi and the Messiah and directs all Musalmāns to be his followers. A Bengali leaflet to the same effect signed by some Bengali Musalmāns, one of whom is an inhabitant of Nātor, has been circulated in Rājshāhi. One belief of the sect is that Dajjāl or Anti-Christ represents the Christian nation, which like Dajjāl is believed to be blind of one eye, *i.e.*, the spiritual eye. The ass of Dajjāl is the railway train, and Hell and Heaven in the two hands of Dajjāl are earthly good or evil meted out by the English and other Christian nations to the people of India and other places. It is the firm belief of his followers that though Mirza Ghulām Ahmad is dead, he has left with his Khalīfa teachings which should guide the people of the world.

A few Musalmāns are followers of Nera Fakir or Guru Safa, and are said to observe one repulsive custom. They not only dance and sing and smoke *gānja*, but, it is reported, drink their own urine and rub it over their body. Their *guru*, or preceptor is their guide, and they all profess to be Musalmāns. They are found in Bāgmāra, Tānor, Nātor, Naogāon and some also in Rāmpur Boālia.

A few notes may be added on some low Musalmān classes found in the district.

SOME LOW
MUSAL-
MAN
CLASSES

The Bānsphors are a wandering tribe, who make and sell baskets, fans and other bamboo articles. They generally leave their dead bodies on sandy places without either burying or burning them. Each man has two names, one Hindu and the other Muhammadan. They can pledge their wives to other men; any children born while they are so pledged are divided equally between the pledger and the pledgee. Their disputes

are decided by two men of their tribe, one called a munshi and the other a pandit; the pandit wears a *tiki* or small pigtail, like Hindus.

The *Abdāls* serve tobacco prepared in *chilums* to the people attending *hāts* or markets. They do not go through a regular form of marriage and divorce. The following is an account of their marriage rites given by an eye-witness. The bride (who had attained puberty) sat inside the house and the bridegroom outside. The bride's brother, who was most probably her guardian, then came to the place and said "You are married, You are married." This was the only ceremony. No Mullah was called in and no formalities, as prescribed by Muhammadan law, were gone through.

The *Bedias* are a gipsy tribe. The males live by hunting and the females by tattooing. The females are themselves tattooed between the eyebrows. They are found in Talāimari and Pānchpāra.

The *Pankhyas*.—Begging is their only profession.

The *Nakshbandis*.—During meditation they set before their mind's eye the image of some animate or inanimate objects, and generally adore God as light. There are very few people of this creed in Rājshāhi.

Other Muhammadans do not eat with the first three classes nor do they drink water touched by them.

Nikāh is an Arabic word meaning marriage, while *shādi* means the rejoicings on the occasion of a marriage. In some parts of India these two words are used synonymously, but in Rājshāhi, as elsewhere in Pengal, the terms imply different kinds of marriages. *Nikāh* is applied exclusively to marriages contracted between a man and a widow, while *shādi* refers only to marriage with a virgin. Widowers, however, can contract both *nikāh* and *shādi* marriages. The *nikāh* marriage among the lower classes is often a secondary kind of marriage, which is not far removed from concubinage. If, for instance, a man illtreats his *nikāh* wife or refuses to maintain her, she not only leaves him, but marries another without going through any form of divorce. The second marriage is performed with all due religious formalities, and the former husband does not resent it at all. "I will not eat your rice" and "I will not give you rice" are the only words which bring about such a separation. A woman again sometimes contracts a second marriage, simply because her husband has not been heard of for some time, even for so short a period as a year or two.

SOME
MUHAM-
MADAN
MARRIAGE
CUSTOMS.

An unusual proclivity to marriage is manifested by the cultivators on the borders of Rājshāhi and Dinājpur, who do not keep to the orthodox limit of 4 wives, but will marry and re-marry till they have six.

OTHER
CUSTOMS.

Certain customs observed by the lower classes of ignorant Muhammadans are tinged by Hindu superstitions. If a child is ill, the Padma Purāna, a Hindu religious book, is recited, and if there is cattle disease, *Corākher Lāru* is sung. During marriage ceremonies a sort of *pūja*, called Mangal Chandijay, is observed. Pictures are painted on the walls, milk, plantains and *sindur* (vermilion) are placed on the floor, incense is burnt, and women sing throughout the night from evening to morning. The general belief is that such a ceremony brings *mangal* or good fortune to the bride and the bridegroom.

Another ceremony called *Ashan Karā* is performed if property is lost, if a person gets any disease or illness (specially rheumatism and gout), or if there is any litigation over landed property. The man who conducts it is called the Bramadaitya Fakīr. Milk and plantains are procured, a bell is rung by the Fakīr, and the Fakīr, while muttering incantations, winnows some black paddy. *Ashan Karā* takes place at night and the Fakīr invokes the aid of Bramadaitya, *i.e.*, the spirit of a deceased Brahman.*

ASSOCIA-
TIONS AND
NEWS-
PAPERS.

There are five associations, of which the principal are the Rājshāhi Association and the Muhammadan Association of Rājshāhi. The Rājshāhi Association, which was founded in 1878 by the late Rajā Pramatha Nāth Ray of Dighapatia, has a membership of 186 members and deals with general questions affecting the district. The Muhammadan Association of Rājshāhi has 200 members and takes up questions affecting the interests of Musalmāns. The other three Associations are also Muhammadan, viz., the Anjumān-i-Mafidul Islāmia of Rājshāhi, which is of recent origin, the Anjumān-i-Taiyid-i-Islāmia of Nātor, and the Naogāon Muhammadan Association of Naogāon, all of which have a small membership. There is one newspaper published locally, viz., the *Hindu Ranjika*, a Bengali weekly journal with a small circulation, which is published at Rāmpur Boālia.

* I am indebted for this information about Musalmān sects, classes and customs to Mouvi Abdul Gaffar, Deputy Magistrate, Rājshāhi.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

For many years past the district of Rājshāhi has had an evil record of unhealthiness. In 1883 and 1884 it held the first place in the list of fever-stricken districts in Bengal; in 1892 and 1893 it again stood at the top of the list; and in seven out of the 10 years ending in 1900 it was among the most feverish districts of the Province. The reported births exceeded deaths in only two years of this decade, viz., 1897 and 1898, which were comparatively healthy years owing perhaps to short rainfall, which caused many of the shallower *bils* to dry up. The decade 1901 to 1910 showed an improvement, for the aggregate of births exceeded the aggregate of deaths by 31,000, and the deaths outnumbered the births in three years only. In every subsequent year, moreover, the birth rate has been consistently above the death rate. On the other hand, the death rate of late years has been exceptionally high; in the five years ending in 1912 the average ratio of mortality was the highest in Bengal, being 38·6 per mille compared with the provincial average of 29·1 per mille.

GENERAL
CONDI-
TIONS.

It might perhaps be surmised that the bad record of the thirty years 1890-1910 may be due in some measure to the chaukidars omitting to report the full number of births, but there is no reason to suppose that they are any more exact in their reports of deaths. Testing of their reports in one locality recently showed that the proportion of vital occurrences not reported was nearly the same for births as for deaths, viz., 6·2 and 6·6 per cent. respectively: altogether, 1,465 births and 1,134 deaths were enquired into and it was found that 90 of the former and 75 of the latter were not entered in the thana registers. If it can be inferred that the proportion is the same elsewhere, it must be admitted that this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

It must not be imagined that the unhealthiness of the district, and more particularly of Nātor (probably the worst place of all), is a new thing. As early as 1788 we find the Collector complaining of the insalubrity of Nātor (which was then the

head-quarters), and in 1825 the seat of administration had to be transferred to Rāmpur Boālia on this account.

The causes of unhealthiness are not far to seek. They are partly due to the configuration of the district, for though there is a comparatively high and well drained strip of sandy soil along the Ganges, and the Barind is another upland tract, the whole of the centre and east of the district is a swampy water-logged depression, in which malaria is rife. The great majority grow rice, the cultivation of which exposes them to the inclemency of the weather. In the sowing season they stand all day up to their knees in the flooded fields while planting out the seedlings. In the cold weather nights, when even a European has to wear thick clothes, their thin cotton clothing is no protection against cold and chills. Their food, moreover, during a large part of the year, and especially during the unhealthy autumn months, consists of new rice of a coarse description, which is apt to produce stomach troubles. These conditions, however, are not exceptional, but common to other parts of Bengal, and it might be argued that an out-of-door life would make the people hardy and inure them against ailments.

A more serious source of danger is the water supply, particularly during the hot weather when tanks either dry up or become very low and the water is polluted by the indiscriminating washing of clothes, house linen and kitchen utensils, and by the bathing of cattle as well as of human beings. It is, in fact, astonishing to see what foul water the people will use not only for culinary purposes but also for drinking. Even where there is a flowing stream, the villagers are criminally careless, leaving the carcasses of animals to rot or be devoured by vultures at the water side. Sometimes too the people will throw dead bodies into the river from the burning ghāt before they have been fully consumed by fire; in one case of which the writer has personal knowledge, the body was kept submerged by means of a heavy weight just above the place from which the villagers drew their water. The rivers and tanks from which the drinking water is obtained are, moreover, not infrequently used for steeping jute, the effect of which cannot but be injurious.

Lastly, the conditions of life in the villages are far from sanitary. They are generally buried in the thickets of jungle and bamboos, the undergrowth of which is used as a convenient latrine. There are numerous pits, from which the earth

for the plinth of the houses has been dug. The pits are filled during the rains with water, which remains stagnant, evaporates slowly and later on in the year becomes foetid. Here "the female mosquito, heavy with her latest feed of blood in the neighbouring house, can lay her eggs, and swarms of larvae find ideal surroundings for their growth." The people, moreover, rarely use mosquito nets so that they easily become inoculated with the malarial poison, which thus spreads unchecked.

As regards the unhealthiness of different tracts, the Nātor subdivision is *facile princeps*: as already stated in the last chapter, its population has literally been decimated in the last 20 years. The people suffer constantly from malaria; they are usually of poor physique, and as often as not show signs of enlarged spleen, while their temperament is listless and lethargic. The one exception is the Nandigrām police-station to the north of Singra, where there is the open country of the Barind and practically no jungle or *bils*; here the inhabitants are by contrast healthy and energetic.

UNHEALTHY
TRY
AREAS.

Turning to the death-rates for 1914 we find that the most healthy part of the district is the Naogaon subdivision, where the death rate averaged only 30 per mille. It was as low as 24 per mille in Naogaon thana, and rose to 36 per mille in Pānchpur thana, where there is the low marshy country called the Bhar. The average for the whole district in this year was 38 per mille, and it will be safe to take those thanas which returned a death-rate of over 40 per mille as unhealthy. On this basis we find that the unhealthy thanas are Lālpur * (53·5) Baraigrām * (50), Nātor * (48·5), Chārchāt (48), Boālia excluding the town of Rāmpur Boālia (43·5), Singra * (43) and Puthia (41). Those marked with an asterisk comprise the Nātor subdivision, and the remainder are in the Sadar subdivision.

The geographical position of these unhealthy thanas is well defined, all being in the south of the district except Singra. A conjecture may be hazarded that their unhealthiness is very largely due to the fact that the country no longer receives such a volume of water from the Ganges as it used to, both because the amount that actually comes inland is less and also because the flood water is now diverted northwards. The explanation is that the mouth of the Baral river has silted up, and there is consequently a diminished flow along it. The flood water of the Ganges does, it is true, come into it during the rains, but it is now taken off to

the north by the rivers Musakhān and Nandakuja, the intake of which has been enlarged, as well as their channels. The result is that the southern portion of this area is no longer flushed and cleansed every year as it used to be. The drainage system is, in short, disjointed, and the *bils* which should get an influx of fresh water annually are left to stagnate. These *bils* are mostly shallow, and their number is large, while the Singra and Baraigrām thanas contain the great Chalan Bil, which, as shown in Chapter I, has now largely, silted up—all facts which help to corroborate Dr. Bentley's theory about the causes of malaria.

UNHEALTHY
SEASONS.

A study of the monthly returns of deaths for the whole district, as shown in the margin, demonstrates very clearly that the unhealthiest months of the year are November and December. This feature is common to the returns for every thana in the district, except Baraigrām, where the unhealthiest months are December and January. The mortality generally is highest in December and then falls

| Month | Number of deaths. |
|---------------|-------------------|
| January ... | 4,545 |
| February ... | 3,768 |
| March ... | 4,676 |
| April ... | 4,828 |
| May ... | 3,752 |
| June ... | 4,572 |
| July ... | 3,922 |
| August ... | 4,191 |
| September ... | 4,100 |
| October ... | 4,783 |
| November ... | 6,209 |
| December ... | 7,388 |

rapidly until February, which marks the culminating period of the people's recovery. There is an increase of mortality in March and April owing to outbreaks of diarrhoeic diseases and cholera, and the minimum is reached in May. The rainy season is fairly healthy, but after September the death-rate rises steadily. October, November and December are the sickly season, and the healthiest months are February, May and July.

FEVER
SEASONS.

Somewhat different results are obtained from a study of the returns of dispensary patients suffering from malaria (in the proper sense of the word), which have been compiled for the Sanitary Commissioner. These show that the season of greatest intensity differs in different parts as follows :—

| Place. | Total of number of cases in the year. | Months of greatest intensity. |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Balihār ... | 619 | July and October. |
| Bhāndarpur ... | 1,272 | June, July and August. |
| Brikutsa ... | 1,266 | June and July. |
| Chaugrām ... | 1,855 | June to September (inclusive). |
| Godāgari ... | 4,060 | October and November. |

| Place. | Total of number of cases in the year. | Months of greatest intensity. |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Joāri ... | 702 | July. |
| Kāliganj ... | 4,351 | June to August (inclusive) |
| Kāmārgaon ... | 1,983 | July to December (inclusive). |
| Kāsimpur ... | 1,018 | October to December (inclusive). |
| Lālpur ... | 1,204 | Ditto. |
| Mahādehpur ... | 1,336 | July and August. |
| Mānda ... | 341 | September and October. |
| Naogaon ... | 2,823 | July, August and October (inclusive). |
| Nātor ... | 5,740 | June to August. |
| Pānānagar ... | 1,262 | July. |
| Puthia ... | 3,782 | October and November. |
| Rāmpur Boālia ... | 10,730 | July to October (inclusive) |
| Tāhirpur ... | 2,672 | July and August. |

Speaking generally, it is apparent that there are two fever seasons, viz., the rains in some places and the first part of the cold weather in others. It is difficult to explain the variations. Godāgāri and Rāmpur Boālia, for instance, are both situated on the bank of the Ganges, while Lālpur is close to that river. In all three cases October is a feverish month, but at Rāmpur Boālia July to September, and at Lālpur December, are feverish, whereas at (1) Godāgāri none of these three months is particularly feverish, (2) at Lālpur July to September are not bad months and (3) at Rāmpur Boālia the virulence of the fever season seems to be spent in November and December. Both the latter, however, are feverish months at Lālpur, and November is a bad month at Godāgāri. Chaugrām and Pānānagar, again, are in the midst of *bil* country, and though July is a bad month in both cases, Pānānagar does not, like Chaugrām, suffer during June, August and September. At the same time, it must be remembered that a great deal depends on the diagnosis of the local doctor, and this caution is particularly necessary with the numbers returned. They are also affected by the popularity of the different hospitals, their accessibility and the character and reputation of the doctors; and it would be quite unsafe to conclude that malaria is specially prevalent in any particular locality merely because the dispensary returns a large number of malarial cases.

The following is a note on the types of fever prevalent in Rajshahi contributed by Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. S. Anderson, TYPES OF
FEVER

L.M.S., late Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi. "Malarial fever in its different forms is endemic in Rājshāhi, about 28 per cent. of the patients treated at the Rāmpur Boālia (P. N. Ray) Dispensary being cases of this disease, while a considerable number of other cases also suffer from enlargement of spleen and other signals of the disease. As usual, the intermittent type of fever is more common than the remittent type. Pernicious attacks are very few, but cases of chronic infection and cachexia are numerous. The tertian, quartan and æstivo-autumnal parasites have been found in the blood in suitable cases. The period of maximal prevalence is from August to December. Throughout the district, there are numerous tanks, *bils*, pools of stagnant water and sluggish and partially silted-up rivers, which form fertile breeding grounds for the mosquitoes which carry malarial infection and disseminate the disease. The poorer classes have no knowledge of the cause of the spread of malaria and take no prophylactic measures, even mosquito-nets being infrequently employed." In this respect the people of Rājshāhi are backward and have not followed the example of other districts where mosquito-nets are freely used.

The following is a list of the dispensaries in the district.

DISPEN-
SARIES.

| Maintained by District Board. | PRIVATE DISPENSARIES. | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| | Under Government supervision. | | Not under Govern- ment supervision. |
| Bhāndarpur ... | Baliār ... | | Dighāpatia. |
| Chaugrām ... | Brikutsa ... | | Dubalhāti. Lālpur* |
| Godāgāri ... | Kāliganj ... | | Naogāon Mission. |
| Joāri ... | Kāsimpur ... | | Nātor (Braja Sun- dari). Pātul-Hāpānia.† |
| Kāmārgāon ... | | | Rāmpur Boālia Mission. |
| Mānda (Thākur) ... | Mahādebpur ... | | |
| Naogāon ... | Puthia ... | | |
| Pānānagar ... | Tāhirpur ... | | |

* Was under Government supervision until 1915.

† Was aided by the District Board till 1915.

| Government dispensary. | Municipal dispensaries. |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sardah | Nātor. Rāmpur Boālia. |

The private dispensaries not under Government supervision submit returns to and are periodically inspected by the Civil Surgeon. In addition to these, a private dispensary is maintained by the Midnapur Zamindari Company at Bilmāria, and another small dispensary is maintained by the local zamindar at Tālanda.

There are altogether 27 dispensaries in the district, which is very fairly equipped from a medical point of view. There are also a number of private practitioners in the more advanced tracts. The Assistant Surgeon, Nator, reports—"Almost all the big villages in this subdivision, viz. Lātor, Gobindapur, Chatin, Arāni, Mālanclī, etc., are full of quacks, *kabirājes*, homœopaths and qualified medical practitioners. In all such villages, especially where there are more than one qualified practitioner the competition is very keen, and as far as I know, the fees charged by them are very, very moderate, being practically nil in their own villages, Re. 1 in neighbouring villages and Rs. 2 for patients residing more than 3 or 4 miles away from their own villages."

The one tract in which the number of dispensaries or of medical practitioners is small is the Barind; but there are some dispensaries on its outskirts at Godāgāri in the Sadar subdivision, Thākur Mānda in the Naogāon subdivision and Chaugrām and Kāliganj in the Nātor subdivision. It is also proposed to establish another District Board dispensary at Tānor. For the relief of the people in out-of-the-way places in this area, the District Board recently deputed an itinerant doctor whose duty it was to attend the Settlement camps, where crowds of villagers collect, and to treat them and give them medicines. The doctor worked under the supervision of an Assistant Settlement Officer, and the experiment was eminently successful.

It may be added that the number of patients in the public charitable dispensaries is exceeded in only two other districts of the Rājshāhi Division, viz., Rangpur and Bogra, and that in the Surgeon-General's Triennial Report on Hospitals and Dispensaries in Bengal for 1911-13, the District Board of Rājshāhi

was singled out for mention, with those of Rangpur and Noā-khāl, as Boards which were particularly liberal to dispensaries.

The following table gives the salient statistics of dispensaries for the year 1914.

| NAME OF DISPENSARY. | NUMBER OF BEDS. | | Indoor patients. | Outdoor patients. | Total. | Income. | Expenditure. |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------|-------------------|--------|------------|--------------|
| | Men. | Women. | | | | | |
| Rāmpur Bōhla ... | 24 | 9 | 763 | 27,812 | 28,576 | Rs. 17,817 | Rs. 11,491 |
| Nātor ... | 12 | 4 | 323 | 13,810 | 13,933 | 4,462 | 3,337 |
| Nāogāon ... | 4 | 2 | 122 | 11,624 | 11,746 | 5,573 | 4,276 |
| Bahār ... | 2 | 2 | 6 | 8,363 | 8,369 | 2,978 | 2,978 |
| Bhāndarpur ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,690 | 4,690 | 1,382 | 1,123 |
| Brikutsa ... | ... | ... | ... | 6,708 | 6,708 | 885 | 885 |
| Changrām ... | ... | ... | ... | 6,066 | 6,066 | 1,170 | 837 |
| Godāgarī ... | ... | ... | ... | 9,140 | 9,140 | 3,501 | 3,216 |
| Joāri ... | ... | ... | ... | 6,616 | 6,616 | 2,026 | 1,337 |
| Kālīgānj ... | ... | ... | ... | 10,218 | 10,218 | 1,645 | 1,645 |
| Kāmārgaon ... | ... | ... | ... | 6,426 | 6,426 | 1,147 | 1,053 |
| Kāstimpur ... | ... | ... | ... | 3,797 | 3,797 | 888 | 888 |
| Lālpur ... | ... | ... | ... | 3,180 | 3,180 | 935 | 935 |
| Mithādebpur ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,440 | 4,440 | 884 | 884 |
| Mānda ... | ... | ... | ... | 5,634 | 5,634 | 1,742 | 1,316 |
| Panānagar ... | ... | ... | ... | 5,850 | 5,850 | 1,307 | 1,145 |
| Pātul ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,140 | 4,140 | 837 | 824 |
| Pothia ... | ... | ... | ... | 11,060 | 11,060 | 1,850 | 1,850 |
| Tāhīrpur ... | ... | ... | ... | 7,704 | 7,704 | 1,800 | 1,800 |

VACCINATION.

The vaccination staff consists of one Inspector, three Sub-Inspectors and 35 licensed vaccinators and 21 apprentices. The number of vaccinations during 1914 was 53,036 or 32 per mille of the population. There is opposition to vaccination among the sect of Musalmāns known as Rafiyadain.

INFIRMITIES.

The census statistics show that the people of Rājshāhi suffer very little from infirmities of insanity, blindness, deaf-mutism and leprosy. Taking the figures for males in 1911, the proportion per 100,000 is only 48 insane, 70 deaf-mutes, 63 blind and 7 lepers. In every case the ratio is below the average for Bengal, while lepers are rarer than in any district in the whole Presidency.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

FROM an agricultural point of view the district is divided into three parts with different characteristics. The first is the Barind, a slightly elevated tract with gentle undulations, comprising the whole of Godāgāri thana, the greater part of Tānor, Mānda and Mahādebpur thanas, and the north of Singra thana. The soil is a stiff clay and grows only transplanted rice, the growth of which is dependent on the rainfall in normal years. When the rainfall is deficient, the cultivators resort to artificial irrigation from tanks, which are numerous. Generally, however, such irrigation is possible only for the fields near the tanks, so that short rainfall is apt to cause partial failure of the crop. The higher ground in this tract is generally barren and little attempt is made to cultivate it, though with time and determination this may be done successfully. The low ground is excellent winter rice land, but it does not lend itself to the cultivation of any other crop.

GENERAL
CONDI-
TIONS.

On some portions of the Barind the slope is so small that it is almost a level plain. Elsewhere the slopes are laid out in embanked fields in order to retain water, which would otherwise flow away. There are, in fact, terraces of rice fields, but the slope is so gentle and the embankments are so small that the term terraces is almost a misnomer. Each field is a little above the other, and during heavy rains the water must be let out or the water overtops the embankment. In this way the bulk of the rain water with its burden of rich silt finds its way to the lowest levels of each depression, taking with it the silt which it has collected from all the higher fields over which it has passed. It follows, therefore, that the lower the field the more fertile it is. There is another consideration also in favour of the lowest fields, viz., that they need less embanking in order to retain the water, and therefore cost less to cultivate.

The riverain and *diāra* lands in the Gangetic thanas of Rāmpur Boālia, Chārgḥāt and Lālpur form another well-defined area, having a grey, sandy soil on which a variety of crops are grown. The principal are *āus* and *āman* paddy,

wheat and pulses, the growth of which depends on the rainfall and the flood water of the Padma. All along the Ganges the land is comparatively high, and there is little winter rice, but *rabi* crops are grown to a considerable extent.

The remaining thanas, viz., Naogāon, Bāgmāra, Puthia, Pānchupur, Nātor, Singra and Baraigrām, and some portions of the Gangetic thanas constitute the third area, whose characteristic features are marshes and swamps (*bils*), which in the rainy season often form large winding lakes. This tract may be subdivided into two, *i.e.*, the portion where the *bils* are low and the portion where they are high and silted up. The low *bils* are to be found in the thanas of Naogāon, Pānchupur, Nātor, Baraigrām, the eastern half of Mānda, the southern portion of Singra, and the northern half of Bāgmāra. Into these *bils* the flood-water of the Padma and the Atrai finds its way every year, more or less. The high *bils* are to be found in the thanas of Lālpur, Chārgat, Puthia, Boālia, the western half of Nātor, and the southern half of Bāgmāra. The channels conveying the inundation of the Padma into these *bils* have silted up, and it is only in years of extraordinary flood that the flood-water enters these swamps. The principal food crops in this area are *āman* rice, *āus* rice, *boro* rice, and some winter crops, such as wheat. The rivers have high banks fringed with villages, beyond which the land slopes away to cultivated paddy fields or perennial marsh.

There is one great depression in this area which is practically all *bil* country. Nearly the whole of the Pānchupur thana remains under water for six or seven months in the year; this tract is known as the Bhar, *i.e.*, the low-lands. The silt left by inundation fertilizes the soil, and jute and paddy grow abundantly. The belt of low land continues to the east of Pānchupur across the Nātor subdivision, stretching from the north of the Nātor thana in a south-easterly direction until it passes into Pābna District to the east of the Baraigrām thana.

EXTENSION OF
CULTIVATION.

Within the last century there has been a great extension of cultivation in the Barind, many portions of which had, for some unknown reason, relapsed into jungle. Only forty years ago it was stated in MacDonnell's *Food-grain Supply and Famine Relief in Bihar and Bengal* that one-half of it was "unreclaimed jungle and waste lands." It has been reclaimed by aboriginal settlers from Chota Nāgpur and the Santāl Parganas who, now that the work of reclamation is done, are gradually becoming Hinduized. Owing to their improvident and convivial habits, many are losing their lands and dropping back to

the condition of landless labourers. On the other hand, a considerable amount of land has gone out of cultivation in the south of the Nātor subdivision, where large stretches of grass land and jungle may now be seen. This may be partially due to the unhealthiness of the locality and the consequent want of energy among the cultivators, but their own explanation is that the land is less fertile because it is no longer fertilized by the silt-laden waters of the Ganges, which used to come further inland. The people in this area have also been affected by the disappearance of indigo cultivation, the place of which has not been taken by jute, for the jute crop does not thrive in this locality.

There are two main classes of soils, namely, *pali* and *khiyār*. SOILS. The former is a light ash-coloured sandy loam, which is very retentive of moisture and is capable of bearing two crops in the year. Common rotations are autumn rice followed by mustard, and jute followed by pulses. This sandy loam had its origin in the sand and silt deposited by the rivers when they overflowed their banks. *Khiyār* is a stiff clay which, as a rule, grows only one crop in the year, namely, winter rice.

The following is a monthly calendar of agricultural operations as practised in Rājshāhi :— AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR.

January.—Sowing of barley, wheat and peas; cultivation of winter sugarcane; harvesting, threshing, and storing of mustard and rape-seed; harvesting of *gānja* and *rabi* sugarcane; harvesting of *āman* paddy concluded, growing of *boro* paddy in nursery beds.

February.—Preparation of mulberry land; planting of *rabi* sugarcane; harvesting, threshing, and storing of wheat, gram, linseed, etc.; harvesting and manufacture of *gānja* continued; and transplanting of *boro* paddy.

March.—Harvesting of wheat, barley, gram, linseed, etc., continued; planting of *rabi* sugarcane continued; harvesting and preparation of turmeric (*halud*); harvesting and retting of sunn hemp; earthing up of mulberry land; transplanting of *boro* paddy; sowing of jute.

April.—Sowing of *āus* and *āman* paddy and cultivation of turmeric commenced; harvesting of *rabi* crops continued; harvesting and retting, etc., of sunn hemp completed; sowing of jute.

May.—Sowing of *āus* and *āman* paddy completed; sowing of *haimāntik* paddy in seed-beds; harvesting of *boro* paddy.

June.—Sowing of *haimāntik* paddy ended; harvesting of *boro* paddy; weeding of *āus* land; and planting of mulberry cuttings.

July.—Preparation of *gānja* land, harvesting of jute weeding and harvesting of *āus* paddy.

August.—Harvesting of *āus* paddy and jute; sowing of *tīl*; sowing of *gānja* on seed-beds, and transplantation of *gānja* seedlings.

September.—Harvesting of *āus* paddy ended; preparation of *rabi* land and sowing of *rabi* crops; picking out of male *gānja* plants commenced.

October.—Preparation of *rabi* lands; sowing of *rabi* crops commenced; planting of mulberry cuttings; manuring of *gānja* lands.

November.—Sowing of *boro* paddy and sunn hemp commenced; sowing of *rabi* ended; harvesting of sugarcane; preparation of mulberry land; manuring of *gānja* lands; harvesting of early *haimāntik* paddy.

December.—Sowing of sunn hemp ended; harvesting of *āman* and *haimāntik* paddy; cutting and crushing of sugarcane; irrigating and manuring *gānja* lands.

PRINCIPAL
CROPS.

According to the statistics for 1914-15, the total cultivated area is 1,194,000 acres, of which 332,000 or 28 per cent. bears more than one crop in the year. The net cropped area is therefore 862,000 acres or 57 per cent. of the district area. Altogether 426,000 acres, constituting very nearly a quarter of the district, are returned as uncultivable and 103,000 acres or 6 per cent. of the district, as cultivable waste other than fallow land (285,000 acres).

The main harvest of the year consists of *aghani*, i.e., winter rice and sugarcane, which account (in 1914-15) for 505,000 acres. *Bhādai* crops cover 431,000 acres, chiefly *āus* rice and jute, and *rabi* crops 258,000 acres. The main crop is rice, which occupies seven-tenths of the cultivated area; other food crops account for a little over a tenth. Jute is the most extensive and valuable non-food crop, representing 10 per cent. of the whole area under cultivation. The greater part of the rice crop consists of *āman* or winter rice, which constitutes 70 to 80 per cent. of the total crop, *āus* rice accounts for nearly 20 per cent. and a small proportion consists of *boro* rice sown in the marshes.

Āman or
winter
rice.

The crop of greatest importance to the district is winter rice or *āman*. The preparation of the land for this crop begins early in the year. In April or May the seed is sown very thick in a nursery, and when the seedlings make their appearance,

another field is prepared into which to transplant them. For this purpose it is necessary to repair the embankments round the field, so that it shall retain all the rain which it receives. It is then repeatedly ploughed up until the surface is reduced to thick mud. The seedlings are then taken out of the nursery and transplanted into rows about 9 inches apart, where they are left to mature, the only subsequent operation being one or two weeding in the latter part of August. The crop is harvested in November or December. The most critical period for this crop is when it begins to blossom in the latter part of October. If there is not sufficient moisture at this time, no grain will form in the ear.

A long stemmed variety is extensively cultivated in the *bils*. It is sown previous to the setting in of the rains, and its growth keeps pace with the rise of the water during the rainy season. The stem grows to the length of 10 or 12 feet and upwards, provided that the rise of the water is gradual. A sudden rise of water will submerge the plants, and if not followed by a speedy fall, will kill them.

Aus or autumn rice, which is also called *bhādai* rice, re- *Aus rice*
quires less water than the other varieties of rice. In fact, it cannot be grown on land which is liable to be flooded during the rains to a depth of more than 2 feet. It does not grow to a height of more than three or three and a half feet, and it does not possess the power of accommodating its growth to the depth of the water surrounding it, as do the long stemmed varieties. Cultivation of the land commences as soon as the early showers permit of ploughing, and the seed is sown broadcast in April or May. As soon as the young plants have attained the height of 5 or 6 inches, the field is harrowed in order to thin out the crop, and also to prepare the way for the first weeding. During May and the first half of June it is most necessary to keep the fields clear of weeds, and it is the amount of labour required for this operation which makes the *aus* a more troublesome crop than the transplanted *āman*. Under favourable conditions the crop is ready for the sickle in August or September. The rice yielded is of coarse quality and difficult to digest; it is used by the lower classes only. The outturn is less in weight, and fetches a lower price than that afforded by the *āman* crop, but it provides the raiyat with a food grain, and his cattle with fodder, at a time of the year when both are scarce. Moreover, it is off the ground early enough to permit of the preparation of the land for the *rabi* crop.

Boro rice. *Boro* rice, which is sometimes called summer rice, is cultivated in some of the *bils* and also on the edges of tanks and water courses. It is first sown in a nursery in February and is transplanted in the *bils* about a month later. It is reaped about the end of May. It is particularly frequent in the deeper *bils* near Dubalhāti. In normal years it is a safe crop, but it is liable to damage if it is swamped by heavy rain in May.

Rainfall. The character of the rice harvest depends, within certain wide limits, more on the seasonable distribution of the rainfall than on its absolute quantity. Although a well marked deficiency in the rainfall will certainly entail a deficient crop yield, yet the magnitude of the deficiency will depend on the distribution of the rain which falls in the month of *Baisākh* (April-May), when there should be light showers to facilitate the preparation of the land and to supply moisture for the sowing of the *āus*. During the month of *Jaiśtha* (May-June) rain is not required, but in *Ashār* (June-July) there should be heavy falls to give plenty of moisture for the young *āus* crop, and to permit of the sowing of the *āman* seed in the nurseries. Heavy rain with intervals of fine weather for transplantation of the *āman* seedlings and for weeding, is required during the month of *Srāban* (July-August). During *Bhādra* (August-September) longer intervals of fine weather are required to facilitate the reaping and threshing of the *āus* crop. Showers at intervals of about a week are required in *Āswin* (September-October), and lighter and less frequent showers in *Kārtik* (October-November). There should be no rain in *Agrahāyan* (November-December), but showers in *Māgh* (December-January) are of great value. A proverb which is frequently quoted runs *Jadi barshe Māgher shesh, dhanya rājā punya des, i.e.,* if it rains at the end of *Māgh*, praised will be the king and blessed the country. No rain is required in the last two months, viz., *Phālgun* and *Chaitra*.

"Paddy," it is stated in a report issued by the Director of Agriculture, "is perhaps the best instance known of the variations which plants have undergone under cultivation. Originally an aquatic grass, the one characteristic which it has most persistently retained amidst all the changes brought about by differences in climate, soil and mode of cultivation, is the need of a large quantity of water for its proper growth. It is the belief of the raiyats that, give the paddy but this one thing needful, it will grow in any soil and under any climate. Indeed, the facility with which it adapts itself to the different classes of soil from the stiffest clay to the lightest of sands, and from the peaty to the saline, is simply wonderful. Compared

with the advantages of a proper supply of water, all other questions in its cultivation, namely, the quality of the seed used, the nature of the soil on which it is grown, the manures applied, and the mode of cultivation adopted, are things of very minor importance."

The transplanted *āman* and the *āus* crops are usually cut close to the ground. In the case of deep-water *āman*, where the stems have been submerged and are useless for straw, the ears alone are cut off. The crop after being cut is carried home either on the heads of reapers or in carts or by *bāngis* and often by boat. The threshing-floor is usually a bare portion of ground plastered smooth with cow-dung, and the grain is separated from the straw by cattle treading on it, or by men beating it on a plank. The winnowing is done by means of a basket held over the head; the lighter chaff is blown away by the wind and the clean grains fall to the ground. Husking is done with a wooden lever called the *dhenki*, which is worked by the women of the household. When the paddy has been threshed, some of it is sold to pay the rent, some is given to the money-lender to clear the raiyat's debt, and the rest is stored for household use or for sale. The grain is stored in large baskets, in stacks or in godowns. The baskets used by the poorer cultivators are of a roughly cylindrical shape, plastered on the inside with cowdung and mud to keep them air and water-tight. Wealthier villagers, who carry on a regular trade in rice, store their paddy in circular stacks called *golas* or in houses with thatched roofs and mud walls.

Disposal of
the crop.

The extensive cultivation of jute in Rājshāhi is comparatively a modern innovation, the area in 1872 being only 14,000 *bighas*, while in 1873 it was as small as 6,000 acres. The area under the crop fluctuates considerably according to the demand for the fibre and the prices obtained, but the normal area is now taken to be no less than 86,000 acres, and in 1914-15 the actual area was 121,500 acres. As an instance of fluctuation may be mentioned the course of events in 1890-91. The previous year was a year of poor outturn and the result was that prices rose fabulously, and those who had stocks made fortunes. This state of things tempted the raiyat to embark to the utmost extent of his means in the cultivation of jute. North Bengal, in fact, became little else than a vast plantation of this staple in 1890-91. The crop was a bumper one, and prices fell to a point considerably below the cost of production. The jute, in fact, was allowed to rot, and was ploughed into the soil in many parts. Again in 1914-15 the area under

Jute

cultivation was 121,500 acres, but owing to the war and the consequent slump in the jute market, very poor price, were obtained and next year the acreage was reduced by half.

Generally speaking, jute does well on lands which are suitable for *aus* rice. The preparation of the land for this crop begins as soon as sufficient rain to moisten it has fallen. It is first ploughed twice or thrice and then allowed to rest for a time, while the cultivator manures it with cow-dung and any other fertilizing agent upon which he can lay his hands. It is ploughed again in April or May, and the surface rendered as fine as possible, after which the seed is sown. When the seedlings are 5 or 6 inches in height, a harrow is passed over the field in order to thin out the plants where they are too thick, and also to assist in the absorption of moisture by breaking up the surface of the ground. The first weeding does not take place until the plants are about a foot high; every effort is then made to eliminate the weeds, and if the work is well done, no further weeding is required.

The crop matures in August or September, and it is then cut and tied up in bundles about 15 inches in diameter, which are steeped in the nearest water for about a fortnight. The steeping process is called *retting*. They are left in the water until the stalks have become sufficiently decomposed to admit of the extraction of the fibre from them. In performing this operation the stem is broken near the root, the protruding end of the fibre is then grasped, and, by gradual pulling and shaking, the rest of the fibre is extracted from the stalk. It is then well rinsed in water, and hung up on bamboos in the sun to dry. The stems are put on one side and are used as fencing and firewood when dry.

Jute is an exhausting crop to the land, and cannot very well be grown on the same plot for two years in succession. Some of the loss to the land is made up by scattering on the surface the leaves of the plant, which are stripped from the stalks before they are steeped.

The best jute has its fibres in long thick clusters, soft and fine, yet strong, of a white glistening colour and free from particles of bark or wood. The inferior qualities have a coarse red fibre. The length or shortness of the stem is said not to affect the price; only its fineness and silkiness are looked to.

Jute is commonly sown at the end of April or beginning of May. A great deal depends on the weather conditions at sowing time. If there is an insufficiency of moisture, the

crop will not germinate. On the other hand, if moisture is in excess, the young seedlings are liable to be drowned before they have strength to resist partial or total submersion. During May and the early part of June jute thrives under much the same conditions as *bhādai* rice. By the end of June it has made good growth, and from thence onwards moderate floods do little harm provided that the plants are not submerged for so long a period that they begin to throw out adventitious roots, which injuriously affect the fibre. Early jute is reaped in July to August and late jute in August to September. At harvest time a large supply of water in rivers and *khāls* is essential so that the process of retting (for which plenty of fairly clean water is required) may be carried out without hindrance.

The prepared jute fibre may enter the market in one of several ways. In the early days of the jute trade it was common for the raiyat to bring his produce to a large centre and there sell it direct to a big dealer. Now-a-days the raiyat usually sells his jute to the *bepāris* or native dealers at the various country markets or *hāts*. Itinerant traders called *pharias* also travel from village to village buying up small quantities of jute which they take by boat, if possible, to the nearest country market. There they meet both the *bepāris*, and also in recent years the representatives of large European firms, who have found it to their advantage to form their own buying agencies at country marts instead of employing the *bepāris* as formerly. The jute is then despatched to the larger centres, where it is sorted into a number of qualities, usually designated Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and "rejections", and then baled. It is sent to Calcutta generally in the form of bales or drums by rail, river and road.

There is a considerable cultivation of *rabi* crops, which are sown after the cessation of the rains, in October and early November, and reaped in March. Rabi crops.

Of the cereals and pulses the most important are gram, wheat and barley. The growth of the two latter is noticeable, as they are produced in only a few of the western districts of Bengal. There are numerous other pulses, such as peas, *musuri* (*Ervum lens*), *khesāri* (*Lathyrus sativus*) and *arhar* (*Cajanus indicus*).

There is a fairly large area under oil seeds, the most important of which are rape and mustard called variously *sarisa*, *rāi*, etc.; during the cold weather the country in the south of the district and also round Naogāon is a blaze of yellow with Oil seeds.

these crops. Other oilseeds are sesamum or gingelly (*til*) and linseed, *i.e.*, the produce of the common flax plant, which is grown almost exclusively for the oil obtained from the seed.

Rape and mustard, which are cold weather crops, require comparatively little rain. They are sown at the end of October or beginning of November on *pali* lands, which usually have already borne a crop of autumn rice, and which have been ploughed in August and September immediately after the first crop was cut. A little rain in November greatly encourages the growth of the crop. If it gets this, it can do without rain till well into January, when another inch or two is required to swell the grain. The average period of growth of the crop is about three months, and it is reaped from February to March.

Sugarcane. Sugarcane is cultivated to a minor extent, the normal area of cultivation being estimated at 18,000 acres. This crop is planted in February and March, and cut in the following January and February, being about eleven months in the ground. The land requires eight or ten ploughings and as many harrowings. The seed is planted on ridges or mounds about a foot above the level of the field. When the young canes are 3 or 4 feet high, they are tied together in bunches of eight or ten so as to keep the stems upright and prevent them being broken by storms. When the canes ripen, they are cut and pressed in iron roller mills, and the juice is boiled into *gur*, *i.e.*, unrefined sugar. The chief varieties are *khari* or *kāgri*, a cane with a thin stem deeply stained with purple, which often grows 12 to 14 feet high, and *kājli*, which has a soft yellow stem. The crop is greatly damaged by wild pigs in the south of the district; in fact, their ravages are so serious that in some areas the people have abandoned the cultivation of sugarcane and make *gur* from the juice of the date palm.

**Mulberry
cultiva-
tion.**

Mulberry cultivation was formerly of great importance in the flourishing days of the silk industry; the area under the plant, which was 3,000 acres five years ago, has now been reduced to 700 acres, of which 400 acres are in the Chārgḥāt thana, mainly in and near Mīrganj and Dākra, 150 acres in Bāgmāra, and 150 acres in Rājāpur. The mulberry shrubs are planted in square plots of about half an acre, which are raised three or more feet above the level of the other fields by means of earth from the ditches which enclose them. They are raised in this way to ensure complete drainage. These curious plantations, if close together, give the country, when seen from above, a curious appearance like that of a chessboard. It goes

without saying that the labour of making the plantation is great and the waste of land is considerable, for the value of the mulberry fields for another crop is very small. In the palmy days of the silk industry, it was a very lucrative crop, and mulberry fields were assessed at high rates of rent. Even though most of the mulberry cultivation has been abandoned and the fields are not suitable for other crops, these high rates of rent are still realised from the cultivators by the zamindars.

The mulberry fields are now in many cases converted into mustard fields and *pān* plantations. *Pān* is the betel vine, for the growth of which thorough drainage, a rich soil and good shade are necessary. The *baraj* or plantation consists of land raised waist high above the level of the surrounding fields, well manured and closely dug. New earth is thrown on it every year. In April or May, the roots of the old creepers are placed on ridges of earth, and the garden is watered daily till the plants are 3 feet high, when it is enclosed and lightly roofed over with reeds and bamboos, round which the creepers entwine themselves. The leaves are eaten with areca nut and lime made from shells. Plucking commences six months after planting, but the leaves of two or three-year-old plants are preferred.

Ganja (*Cannabis indica* or *sativa*) is an extremely valuable crop grown on a circumscribed area in the Naogaon and Mahādebpur thanas. The supervision of its cultivation is a special branch of the administration, and a detailed account of it will be found in Chapter XII. Tobacco is grown to a small extent in homestead lands. The cultivation of potatoes on the outskirts of the villages is extending, as the knowledge that this is a paying crop is spreading among the cultivators. Indigo was formerly a crop of great economic importance, and there were numerous indigo factories in the district. It was grown more especially on *char* lands and alluvial accretions. As late as 1897 there were 8,000 acres under the crop.

A Government Agricultural Farm covering 63 acres was opened at Rampur Boalia in 1904. Special attention has been paid to the cultivation of different varieties of sugarcane, viz., (1) *gandheri*, (2) *vendamukhi*, (3) *shamsara*, (4) *khāri*, (5) B. 147, (6) stripped Tanna and (7) yellow Tanna, with most encouraging results. Demonstrations of potato growing have also been carried on, and it has been established that potato is an excellent crop for Rājshāhi, a fair outturn being 70 to 80 mannds per *bigha*.

Pān
plan-
tations.

Other
crops.

AGRICUL-
TURAL
FARM.

VETERINARY
RELIEF.

The District Board has a staff of three Veterinary Assistants, one for each subdivision. It has decided to establish a Veterinary dispensary at Rāmpur Boālia, and the building will be erected shortly.

SERICULTURE.

There is a sericultural nursery maintained by Government at Mīrganj in the Chārghāt thana, the object of which is to rear and distribute healthy silk-worms. A sericultural school was started at Rāmpur Boālia by the Diamond Jubilee School Committee in 1898 with a view to impart a sound practical scientific training which might help the people to develop the various departments of the silk textile industry in Bengal. As the scheme met with the approval and support of the Government of Bengal, the institution was made over by the promoters to the District Board of Rājshāhi, which managed and maintained it till the end of the year 1906. The school was made over to Government in January 1907 and since then is being managed by a Managing Committee under the direction of the Director of Agriculture.

The school teaches practical methods of (a) mulberry cultivation, (b) microscopic seed selection, (c) detection and prevention of silk-worm diseases, and (d) rearing of Indian silk-worms. Cultivation is carried on at Kādirganj in Rāmpur Boālia, where the school possesses 22 *bighas* of land; each student is given a plot of 2 *cottahs* to cultivate.



CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

THE configuration of the district is such that the whole of it is very unlikely to suffer from famine at one and the same time. In the upland country comprised in the Barind, only one crop, *āman* rice, is grown in the year; this is almost entirely dependent on the local rainfall. Nearly the whole of the rest of the district, however, excluding the land near the banks of rivers, is low land, and a large portion, viz., the Bhar, is subject to inundation for at least five months in the year. It is rarely that full crops are obtained from both tracts in the same year, for this would imply good rainfall and also a moderate inundation. A simultaneous failure in both tracts is equally unlikely to occur, for in a year of short rainfall there would be fair crops in the Bhar, though those in the Barind might fail. The Bhar, moreover, is further protected from famine from the fact that the people get at least two harvests in the year, and there is such a variety of crops that it is next to impossible that all can fail simultaneously. Rice of three kinds (*āman*, *āus* and *boro*) is grown almost universally; there are also various pulses, mustard and sugarcane; and jute is fairly abundant.

LIABILITY
TO
FAMINE.

While a general famine is not to be apprehended, different tracts are liable to suffer from failure of crops. The food-supply depends mainly on the harvest of the *āman* or winter rice, and in order to understand how different parts are affected by unfavourable conditions of the seasons, it is necessary to bear in mind the extent to which this crop is grown in the three regions into which the district is divided for agricultural purposes, viz., the Barind, the Bil area, and the Gangetic tract. The *āus* crop is of minor importance, as it is sown on only a fourth of the area covered by winter rice, and the yield is but two-thirds per acre of that given by *āman*. It is, however, the only rice cultivated on the Ganges *chars* and on much of the high lands.

In round numbers, the district contains a million and a quarter acres under cultivation (reckoning twice that which

bears two crops), of which three-quarters of a million are sown with rice, a quarter of a million with other food crops, a hundred thousand acres with jute, and seventy thousand with oil-seeds. The minor food crops are therefore of little use if there is a failure of the rice crops, and the other products are almost negligible from a famine point of view with the exception of the lucrative jute crop. This supplies the cultivators with a reserve of ready money, which they use to pay their rents. Unfortunately the surplus is only too often squandered in improvident expenditure.

In the Barind winter rice is the only crop, and this tract is liable to suffer from scarcity if there is a failure of the rains at critical periods, *e.g.*, at the time of sowing or in September and October when the grain is coming into the ear. The country is however undulating, and the low lands, which receive the drainage of the slopes, may be regarded as fairly safe. It is a different matter with the higher lands on the slopes, in which the crop is liable to failure if the rains are deficient or badly distributed. In such a contingency the cultivators are forced to do what they can to save the crop by means of irrigation from tanks.

The Bil area is practically immune from famine, for there is always water in the low *bils* and the land is annually fertilized by the silt deposited in flood time. The *bils* yield a rich harvest of rice, if only the plants are not drowned by too early a flood or by a very deep inundation.

In the third tract, *i.e.*, the riverain and *diāra* lands in thanas Lālpur, Chārgḥāt and Boālia, the growth of the crops depends on seasonable rainfall and the flood water of the Ganges. The main crop on the *diāras* is *āus* rice, and the people are not so dependent on *āman* rice as elsewhere.

FAMINE
1769-70.

Rājshāhi is known to have suffered from the great famine of 1769-70; for we find a statement in the Proceedings of the Provincial Council of Murshidābād, dated 28th April 1770, that "the districts that have more practically suffered from the unfavourableness of the season are Purnea, Rājmaḥāl, Birbhūm and a part of Rājshāhi (spelt Rajeshahye); indeed, the only districts under this department from which complaints have not come of the want of rain are Dacca and those low countries that are situate to the eastward, where the rivers have overflowed and fertilized the lands even this remarkable dry season."

There are no details available as to the extent of the

suffering, but a few scattered reports by the Supervisor* of Rājshāhi (spelt Rajshie) show that Rājshāhi was more severely affected than the tracts to the north and south. In December 1770 he reported : "I cannot give a more striking proof of the deficiency of the August harvest, than by mentioning a circumstance probably never before known, that the consumption of grain in these parts is now supplied by importation from the northern districts and the precincts of Murshidābād ; and that at Nātor, situate in the heart of a rice country, grain sells at 18 seers per rupee, whilst at Murshidābād it is above 30 seers of the same species of weight." The price of rice, it may be said incidentally, seems extraordinarily cheap when compared with the modern rate. Distress obviously deepened next year, for in April 1771 the Supervisor reported :—"I receive advices from the *parganas* of the frequent firing of villages by people whose distress drives them to such acts of despair and villainy. Numbers of ryots, who have hitherto borne the best of characters amongst their neighbours, pursue this last desperate resource to procure themselves a subsistence."

Considering that part of Rājshāhi was described as among the most severely affected tracts, it may fairly be inferred that the desolation was similar to that described by the Resident of the Durbar in June 1770—"The scene of misery that intervened, and still continues, shocks humanity too much to bear description. Certain it is, that in several parts the living have fed on the dead, and the number that has perished in those provinces that have most suffered is calculated to have been within these few months as six is to sixteen of the whole inhabitants."

The worst famine within the memory of the present generation was that of 1874. Although in Rājshāhi, as in Bengal generally, the year preceding 1873 presented abnormal phases of weather, it appears that the crops of 1872 were up to the average. In 1873, however, the rainfall was strikingly deficient, especially in September and October, the most critical months for the rice crops. The average rainfall in the Nātor subdivision was 61 inches annually, but in 1873 only 43 inches fell ; and in the Sadar subdivision there was a deficiency of 27 inches in a normal fall of 59 inches. Out of the normal fall of 18 inches in September and October in Nātor, only 6 inches fell in 1873 ; while in the Sadar subdivision the normal fall during those months, amounting to

FAMINE
OF 1874.

* The Supervisor corresponded to the modern Collector.

16½ inches, was deficient by 13 inches. An extensive failure of the rice crops was the inevitable consequence. Generally, it may be said that the *āus* or autumn crop was one-half or 8 annas, and the *āman* or winter crop 6 annas or three-eighths of an average crop all over the district. The Barind was the most severely affected tract, the outturn of *āman* rice being estimated at 3 annas only, while elsewhere it was 6 to 7 annas.

The shortness in supplies, caused by the failure in the main crops of the district, had the immediate effect of forcing up prices. In January the price of rice was twelve seers for the rupee, *i.e.*, more than twice as dear as ordinary rates, and the harvesting of the cold weather crops, which in 1874 yielded a fair outturn, had no general effect in lowering market rates. There was a sudden rise of prices in May, and on 2nd June the Collector reported: "There have been no cases of starvation, but there is no doubt whatever that the opening of poor-houses and the distribution of food both in return for labour and gratuitously has arrested such a result." High prices continued throughout the month, and in his next narrative the Collector had to report that rice had in places reached the altogether prohibitive price of 7½ seers the rupee, and that there had been a total cessation of importation. The condition of the people, which hitherto had not been, all the circumstances considered, unsatisfactory, began now to cause anxiety to the local administration. On the 30th July the Collector reported that people were undoubtedly in a worse condition in many places than they had hitherto been; that numbers were flocking to the poor-houses; that he had seen several persons so emaciated that they could scarcely walk and a large number of children in a very reduced condition. No authenticated deaths from starvation were reported, but the Collector "could safely assert that had it not been for the relief afforded, there would have been many deaths from starvation."

The total expenditure on relief was Rs. 2,34,000, of which Rs. 1,34,000 represented advances. The numbers receiving relief gradually and steadily rose from 1,500 in the middle of April to 59,000 at the end of July, of whom 26,500 received gratuitous relief and 32,500 were employed on light labour. By the end of August they were reduced to 40,000 and by the end of September to 8,000.

In addition to these; a small number of labourers were employed on relief works, but the greatest number in any month was only 3,316 (in March).

In 1897, when other districts suffered from famine, Rāj-shāhi was only slightly affected, though there was a partial failure of the crops. In other words, there was scarcity which did not culminate in famine.

FAMINE
OF 1897.

The crop of the previous year had been below the average, being 12 annas for *āman* and 11½ annas for *āus* rice. For this reason *boro* rice was sown on an unusually large area, viz., 77,000 acres against the normal area of 15,000 acres, and the harvest was 14 annas. In 1897 there was no great deficiency in the rainfall as a whole. In August, however, there was a serious shortage, the average for the district being only 4 inches, and the drought extended to the middle of September. The subsequent fall in this month was too late to compensate fully for the long absence of rain, and October was practically rainless. Moreover, the flood from the Ganges was a foot and-a-half less than the average of the three preceding years, and it lasted 29 days against a normal duration of 79, and this seriously affected the outturn in the riverain tracts. On the other hand, there was a fair flood from the Atrai, which replenished the *bils* in the north of the district. Generally speaking, abnormal meteorological conditions and the abnormally low inundations of the Padma injured the year's winter harvest, prejudiced the prospects of the coming spring crop, and affected the condition of the people at large.

The outturn of rice for the district was estimated by the Collector as 8 annas for *āus* and 6½ annas for *āman*, viz., 2 to 4 annas in the Gangetic tract, 6 to 8 annas in the Barind, and 8 to 12 annas in the Bil area. The Commissioner, however, considered that the Collector had under-estimated the yield and put the outturn at 4 annas for the Gangetic tract, 8 annas for the Barind, and 12 annas for the Bils. Whereas in 1873 the most affected tract was the Barind, the worst part of the district during this year was the tract comprised in thanas Boālia, Puthia, Chārghāt, the southern half of Bāgmāra and that portion of the Nātor thana which lies on the west of the railway line.

Prices rose to a high figure, common rice selling at 7½ seers a rupee at Rāmpur Boālia in October 1896 and at Nātor in November 1896. Next year they were worse, the price varying in July 1897 from 6 seers to 7 seers 12 chittaks, while in August the highest price was 6½ seers at Puthia and the lowest 8 seers at Mahādebpur. Many people at that time practically lived on the melon crop, which was very plentiful, on *ol*, *kachu* and other makeshifts. Gratuitous relief was

offered, and in the latter month 9,000 persons were relieved from the Charitable Fund, some of which was raised locally. They were mostly pauper women and children, and much of the aid was given in the form of gratuitous doles of rice.

Test works were started, but it was found that except in one small tract no one would come to a test work. The exception was a place near the Ganges, where the people were hard hit by the collapse of the silk industry, and there was consequently a want of employment. The test works consisted of two channels called the Nārad Khāl and Bairāgi Khāl, one 5½ miles and the other 3 miles long, the object of which was to convey the Ganges water to some inland *bils*. There was no famine in the usual sense of the word, but only severe distress of a degree which did not interfere with the people finding employment, but, on the other hand was not sufficient for them to accept it on famine terms.

SCARCITY
OF 1908-09.

There was some scarcity in the Barind in 1908-09 owing to deficient rainfall and a consequent partial failure of the *āman* crop. Test works were opened and agricultural loans distributed, but no other relief measures were necessary.

FLOODS.

Rājshāhi is subject to floods caused by the annual rising of the Ganges, and often aggravated by excessive rainfall. In moderation, these annual inundations instead of being a source of mischief are of the greatest possible benefit by fertilising the soil. On only two occasions are floods known to have occurred on such a serious scale as to affect materially the general harvest of the district. The first took place in 1838, and the second in 1865; the latter was mainly caused by excessive rainfall within the district. Again, in 1871, heavy rainfall caused extensive inundations in Rājshāhi as in other districts that are washed by the Ganges. The waters were out on this occasion from the end of August to the second week of October, and the whole country was flooded. It is believed that these were the highest floods on record in the district; but the damage done to the crops was comparatively small. The cattle suffered much from the loss of fodder, and the people were greatly inconvenienced by being driven to seek shelter on high places. When the water subsided, cholera broke out in an epidemic form. The *boro āman* rice crop, however, grew on in most places uninjured, and managed to keep its head above the waters, even when they rose quickly; and eventually a very fair rice harvest was reaped.

The town of Rāmpur Boālia is protected by a substantial embankment, 7 miles long, but has suffered from floods on

more than one occasion. It was almost swept away sixty years ago. Mr. Simson remarks in his *Sport in Eastern Bengal* that the destruction was terrible and none of the houses he knew remained. There was again a serious inundation in 1864, when the embankment was breached and the water of the Ganges flooded the greater part of the town. There was much suffering among the people, who took shelter, with their cattle, on the top of the embankment, and a portion of the town, including the Government offices, was swept away.

The district lies within the zone of seismic activity and suffered somewhat severely from the earthquake of 1897. The shock, which occurred at about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of the 12th June, appears to have been generally felt, in varying degrees of intensity, throughout Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, from the South Lushai Hills on the east to Shāhābād on the west, and from Pari on the south to Sikkim on the north. The force of the wave was greatest in the districts lying to the east of the 88th degree of longitude, and northwards of the deltaic districts of the 24 Parganas, Nadia, Jessore and Farīdpur. In this district the shock was severe, specially on the eastern side, but the loss of life was comparatively small. Four deaths were reported from Nātor, two from Naogāon, and nine from Rāmpur Boālia, while the number injured was not large.

EARTH-
QUAKE OF
1897.

The damage to property, however, was great. Of Government buildings, the Judge's Court house, the Collectorate, the record-room, the circuit-house, the police barracks and subsidiary buildings, the Jail and subsidiary buildings, the post office, the educational buildings and the Para Kothi at Rāmpur Boālia were all more or less damaged. At the subdivisions of Nātor and Naogāon, the subdivisional offices, subsidiary jails and other buildings were injured. The loss to Government was roughly estimated at a lakh and a half. The loss of private property has not been estimated, but the zamindars, as a class, suffered very much, the greatest loss falling upon the leading families residing at Nātor, Dighāpatia, and Puthia. The indigo and silk factories also sustained serious damage. Earth fissures occurred throughout the district, and the roads were badly cracked in places. Some slight damage was also done to crops by subsidence of the ground. Several of the earth fissures extended for more than half-a-mile, and the width of one was 9 or 10 feet. On the railway the large bridges over the Atrai and Baral were much damaged, and many of the small bridges and culverts rendered unsafe.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, PRICES AND WAGES.

RENTS.

THE following are reported to be the current rates of rent per standard *bigha* paid for land according to the landlord's classification.

(1) *Bhiti* or *khuti*, *i.e.*, the plinth area of a house—Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 per *bigha*; (2) *Palan*, *i.e.*, land round the homestead which is used for growing vegetables and tobacco—Re. 1-8 to Rs. 3-8; (3) *Sari*, *i.e.*, high lands where mustard and other *rabi* crops are grown—Re. 1 to Rs. 3-8; (4) *Bāgān*, *i.e.*, orchards—about Rs. 3 per *bigha*. The rent for rice land varies from 13 annas to Re. 1-8, and the average may be taken as a little over one rupee per *bigha*. As regards the incidence of rent in different parts, in the Nātor subdivision the highest rates are current in the Lālpur thana; in the Naogāon subdivision the rents are high near Naogāon and decrease the further west one goes. The above, it may be added, are the rates paid by raiyats, and under-raiyats pay at least twice as much.

PRODUCE
RENTS.

Rents in kind are paid for a considerable portion of the area under cultivation. Statistics have not been prepared for the whole district, but are available for the Nātor subdivision, where it has been ascertained that 8 per cent. of the area is held under the system of produce rents. As a rule, the tenant supplies seed, cattle and ploughs and pays half of the crop to his landlord. The Lālpur thana is an exception, for there the landlord supplies seed, plough and cattle; in this thana a large area is on the margin of cultivation, and some of it is always lying fallow, whereas there is comparatively little land out of cultivation elsewhere. It is the rule that where the landlord supplies the seed, or even half the seed, he takes half the straw in addition to half of the crop.

Half the produce is paid as rent in 98 per cent. of the area in which rents are paid in kind. The remaining 2 per cent. is held under a curious system known as *bhāg khājāna*, *i.e.*, half of the rent in kind is commuted to a money rent, so that the cultivator pays one-quarter of the produce *plus* a cash rent. The latter is the value of one-quarter of the produce, and the

aggregate rent is usually higher than the raiyati rate of rent in the locality. Cultivators who pay rent in kind are generally called *bargadārs* or *ādhidārs*. A considerable portion of the land paying produce-rents is held for a short period by one cultivator under another.

This system is particularly mischievous where a large

| Thana. | Number of experiments. | AVERAGE OBTAIN PER ACRE. | |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| | | Maunds. | Seers. |
| Pānchpur ... | 71 | 22 | 26 |
| Naogaon .. | 45 | 22 | 2 |
| Mahādehpur | 66 | 21 | 15 |
| Mānda ... | 99 | 23 | 22 |
| Singra ... | 22 | 18 | ... |
| Nātor ... | 24 | 12 | ... |
| Baraigrām ... | 12 | 12 | ... |
| Lālpur ... | 9 | 8 | ... |

money-lender gets a number of raiyati holdings into his possession and then lets them out in *barga*, obtaining half the produce as rent. The marginal table, which shows the results of crop cutting experiments made by the Settlement staff, sufficiently indicates what large profits the land-

lords obtain under this system. The large difference between the results in the first four cases and the last four cases is due to the fact that the former relate to a good year (1913-14), and the latter to a bad year (1912-13). Taking the former figures, we find that when paddy sells at about Rs. 2-8 per standard maund, the value of the landlord's share is about Rs. 27-8 per acre or Rs. 9-3 per *bigha*.

Throughout the district it is the usual and recognized *Abwābs*, practice for the zamindar to take *abwābs* from his tenants in addition to the rent. These are exacted whenever the zamindar had unusual expenditure to incur, as for instance, on the occasion of a marriage, *srāddha* or funeral ceremonies, the assumption of the sacred thread, *annaprāsana* or first taking of rice, the erection of buildings or the purchase of an elephant. In addition to such irregular contributions, there are regular levies which recur every year. The principal are—

(1) *Grām kharcha*, i.e., contributions towards the cost of feeding the officers and peons of an estate on their visits to different parts of the property, the pay of the local staff, and expenditure on entertainments during the *Punyab*. The incidence of this *abwāb* is distributed among the villages concerned at so much per rupee.

(2) *Tahrīr*, i.e., payment to the clerical staff for writing receipts.

(3) *Prādār roz*, i.e., contribution for the food of peons who visit a village.

(4) *Farāgati*, i.e., payment for a statement of accounts.

- (5) *Pārbani*, i.e., payments for puja entertainments.
- (6) Payments on account of a Naib's warm clothes.
- (7) *Shādīāna* or marriage fees. As instances of such fees, the landlord of one estate exacts Re. 1-10 from a tenant who makes a regular marriage (*shādi*) and Rs. 3-8 in the case of *nikāh* contracts; in another estate the marriage fee is Rs. 2-4 for Hindus and Rs. 4-8 for Muhammadans.

The following extracts from reports of officers engaged in the settlement operations are of interest as illustrating the working of the system. One officer reports as follows :—"The *tahsildār* of one estate realises 3 annas to 8 annas in the rupee as *kharcha* under various heads, e.g., *ijaradāri kharcha*, *sadar kharcha*, *mofussil kharcha*, etc. Besides this, the tenants who breed poultry are required to supply a fixed number of well-developed hens at an inadequate price to the local cutcherry every year. Thus, the tenants of one village have to supply well-developed hens, ordinarily sold at 8 annas to 10 annas per head, at 2 annas per head every year. The tenants of another village have to supply 16 well-developed hens every year on the same terms. A second large proprietor realises 4 annas to 6 annas and a third 2 annas to 3½ annas in the rupee as *kharcha*, while smaller landlords realise from 2 annas to 8 annas for every rupee of rent."

According to another officer, the *abwābs* known as *grāmya kharcha*, or village expenses, vary from 1 to 1½ annas per rupee of rent, but are as much as 6 annas in one estate, where part of the sums realized are paid as *nazar* to the proprietor, his son, his manager and the officers of the head-quarters cutcherry. "The rate at which the *abwāb* is levied is" he writes, "settled in a very interesting way. The expenses are defrayed by the *tahsildār* throughout the year; at its close the village headmen assemble, with the *tahsildār* as president. The *tahsildār* will then read out, item by item, the expenses incurred, advocating his cause in each case, and the village Pramāniks, after consultation among themselves, will allow or disallow a particular item as they think fit. A total is then struck for the sanctioned amount, and it is divided by the total collection of the mauza, which gives the rate of *abwāb* per rupee of rent. The order passed by this miniature parliament has to be obeyed by all, and the tenants pay the *abwāb* without grumbling. If the landlord happen to be a strong one, the Pramāniks do not dare openly to oppose the payment but try to persuade the *tahsildār* to deduct a bit for this and something for that." The writer then cites the case of a

village in which the *grāmya abwāb* for the year amounted to Rs. 95, of which Rs. 17-2 was paid to the landlord's *paiks* and *gomāsthā*, Rs. 43-3-6 to the landlord and the remainder (Rs. 34-10-6) was spent by the villages for their own benefit. For part of the *grāmya abwāb* is sometimes devoted to public purposes, such as the repairs of a village road, the excavation of a *khāl*, etc. : in the instance in question the villagers allotted money not only for the repair of a road but also for the food of the men present at the meeting which settled the rate at which the *abwāb* was to be levied.

The contributions levied at irregular intervals, when the zamindar has to incur heavy capital expenditure, are called *bhiksha* or *māngan*. The following are typical instances of these demands. One landlord collected 1 anna per rupee for the upkeep of an elephant. He also tried to collect 6½ annas per rupee of rent on account of the expenditure which he had to meet in order to protect his interests against the tenants during the settlement operations. Another demanded 8 annas per rupee of rent for the cost of some new buildings he was erecting in Dacca and actually succeeded in collecting Rs. 16,000. Another well-to-do landlord made regular collections for the education of his son as a barrister in England. Yet another estate realized Rs. 16,000 on threat of enhancing the rent of the tenants in a property it had recently acquired. Perhaps the most impertinent imposition of this kind was that levied by a landlord who had been fined Rs. 400 by the Settlement authorities ; this he at once proceeded to realize from his tenants.

In large estates the demands, being usually fixed in amount and in date, are not so harassing as in small properties. The payment of contributions when the zamindar incurs some unusual heavy expenditure is, moreover, the custom of the country, and so long as the demand is kept within customary limits the exactions are not opposed. The tenants prefer to pay them rather than to incur the enmity of the zamindar. It is in fact easier to induce the raiyats to pay such unusual demands than to get them to agree to an enhancement of rent. As a rule, the power of the zamindar to levy such cesses is limited by custom and public opinion, and their amount by what the raiyats can afford to pay without reducing their resources too much. In only one estate have the raiyats combined to resist the payment of *abwābs*, and here opposition was due to the fact that the demands were too exorbitant. How exorbitant they were may be realised from the fact that the

Settlement Officer states that he thinks it no exaggeration to say that elsewhere in the subdivision the *abwābs* vary from 4 to 9 annas per rupee of rent, but even so are less than in the estate in question.

ENHANCE
MENT OF
RENTS.

Settlement operations are now in progress in the district, and it is hoped that they will be effectual in putting a stop to excessive enhancements of rent, which have been made by the zamindars for some time past. The usual *modus operandi* is for the zamindars to have their tenants' land measured and to claim that the area has been largely increased, whereas the tenants complain, often with cause, that the standard of measurement has changed. The *bigha* in common use about 70 years ago was very much bigger than the standard *bigha* of the present day. The unit of the latter, as is well known, is the *hāth* of 18 inches, whereas the *hāth* of Raja Rāmjīban of Nātor was about 22 inches long. The substitution of the large *bigha* for the small *bigha* has been going on for the last 70 years and is still in progress in some estates. The change in the standard of measurement has not been accompanied by a reduction in the rate per *bigha* and has consequently involved large enhancements of the raiyat's rents.

"Within the last twenty years," it is said in the Rājshāhi Settlement Report of 1912-13, "rents have been very much enhanced, and the provision of the Tenancy Act that rent shall not be enhanced by contract more than 2 annas in the rupee at a time appears always to have been a dead letter. The temper of the raiyats (or the repression of it in the course of a long time) may be judged from the fact that big landlords have often been able to bring in enhancements of 8 annas and more per rupee of the rent with no more trouble than a landlord in Eastern Bengal has in bringing an enhancement of 3 annas. The enhancement has usually been made on the plea (unanswerable by the raiyat) of an increase of area upon measurement. In nearly all the big estates there have been excessive enhancements, although the process goes on in one or two mauzas at a time and has not yet reached all the mauzas. Where these enhancements of rent correspond to a real improvement in the management of the estate, the raiyat has some compensation, but this is not always the case."

In some cases the enhanced demand is nothing more nor less than extortion. One large landlord, for instance, coolly increased the rents in some of his villages by 6 annas in the rupee without even the excuse of an increase of area. Even

more flagrant demands are made under the colour of documents. For instance, some landlords demanded rents at double the existing rates on the strength of areas given in some partition papers. They overshot the mark, even with such a submissive tenantry as that of Rājshāhi, and the result has been that they have collected practically no rent for five years.

Owing mainly to the general development of the country, PRICES. the opening up of communications and the increasing connection between local and foreign markets, the prices of agricultural produce have steadily risen during the last half century. During the famine of 1866 the price of rice was 8 seers per rupee, which would now be regarded as more or less normal. Prices rapidly declined after that year, and we find that in 1870-71 the price of first class rice was Re. 1-4 to Rs. 2 per maund and of second class rice 12 annas to Re. 1 a maund. To show the extraordinary change in the level of prices during the last 40 years, it may be mentioned that in Hunter's *Statistical Account of Rājshāhi* (published in 1876) it is stated that the Collector was of opinion that preparations for relief operations on the part of Government were necessary if food prices showed the slightest tendency to rise beyond 8 seers per rupee. The fact of rice selling at the rate of 16 seers per rupee in January or February soon after the great winter harvest should, he considered, be accepted as a warning of the approach of famine later in the year. With these statements may be compared the fact that, according to the official price list (retail), the price of rice in 1914 was 7½ seers at Nātor, 7 seers 7 chittacks at Naogāon, and 7½ seers at Rāmpur Boālia, and that at present (April 1915) the price varies from 6½ seers to 7½ seers per rupee.

Prices generally have been levelled up and money is more plentiful, so that prices which would have been an indication of scarcity are so no longer. How greatly conditions have altered in this respect may be gathered from a report submitted by the Supervisor* of Rājshāhi during the famine of 1770. Writing in December 1770 he said: "I cannot give a more striking proof of the deficiency of the August harvest than by mentioning circumstances probably never before known that the consumption of rice in these parts is now supplied by importation from the northern districts and precincts of Murshidābād, and that at Nātor, situate in the heart of

* The Supervisor corresponded to the modern Collector.

a rice country, grain sells at 18 seers per rupee, whilst at Murshidābād it is above 30 seers of the same species of weight."

| Thanas. | December 1873. | December 1896. |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Srs. | Srs. |
| Boālia ... | 12 | 990 |
| Futhia ... | 13½ | 9 |
| Bāgunāra ... | 11 | 8 |
| Godāgari ... | 10½ | 10½ |
| Tānor ... | 13 | 9½ |
| Chārghāt ... | 13½ | 7½ |
| Nātor ... | 12½ | 7 |
| Singra ... | 13½ | 11½ |
| Baraigāram ... | 16½ | 10 |
| Lālpur ... | 15 | 9 |
| Naogāon ... | 15 | 10½ |
| Mānda ... | 15 | 9½ |
| Pānchupur ... | ... | 11 |

The marginal figures showing the price of common rice in different localities during December in the famine of 1873-74 and the scarcity of 1896-97 are of interest in this connection. The prices which were regarded as phenomenal in 1896 are now regarded as normal, and it is proof of the increased resources of the people that they do not cause any privations. On the contrary the agriculturists have profited

largely. As remarked in the Dinājpur District Gazetteer—"The rise in prices does not affect the cultivating classes, who, except on the rare occasions of a failure of the crops, can grow more than sufficient to supply their own needs, while the good market for their surplus produce makes for their prosperity. To these a year of comparatively short outturn with high prices is almost as welcome as one of large outturn with low prices. Landless labourers also share in this prosperity, as work is abundant. It is otherwise with the non-agricultural middle classes, generally known as *bhadralok*, from whose ranks the professions and the Government services are recruited. Notwithstanding higher salaries and improved prospects, these are steadily deteriorating in prosperity, and the complaint is general amongst them that they are worse off than their fathers were on half their income."

WAGES.

In 1870 the Collector returned the wages of an ordinary cooly or day labourer at two annas and those of agricultural labourers at two and half annas, which was double the rate said to have been prevalent prior to the famine of 1866. The cultivator would think himself fortunate now-a-days if he could obtain labour so cheaply, for the wages of labourers do not fall below five annas and are generally 6 to 8 annas a day; while at times of pressure labourers can command as much as one rupee a day together with their meals. As regards skilled labour, blacksmiths and carpenters were paid at the rate of six annas, and masons and bricklayers four annas a day in 1877. At present the wages

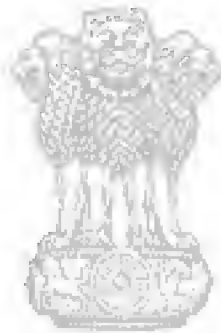
of blacksmiths are six to twelve annas and of masons four to twelve annas per diem.

The increase in the wages of labour is due largely to the increase in the demand, which has resulted from the enhanced profits derived from agriculture, for the first use which a cultivator makes of his increased wealth is to cease to labour himself and to hire labour to do his work. The demand for labour for the jute industry has also had a direct effect in increasing the wages of the cooly, for the area under jute has increased enormously during the last 40 years, and weeding, steeping, etc., require a considerable number of hired hands. Labour is largely imported, and every year there is an influx of thousands of labourers from other districts, especially for the great *āman* harvest.

The increase in the price of paddy and of jute has greatly increased the profits of the agricultural classes. It is true that the full benefit of the increased price is often not reaped by the actual cultivator, as part of it goes to the middleman and the money-lender, but the middleman himself frequently belongs to the agricultural classes and as a rule the money-lender is not a foreigner but a local man. In spite of the increase of income, the standard of comfort has not been raised appreciably. Corrugated iron roofs have taken the place of thatch—a change which decreases the risk of fire and the cost of repairs, but is not conducive to the comfort of the inhabitants in the hot weather. Metal utensils have taken the place of articles of cheaper make; shirts, vests and stockings are more generally worn; umbrellas are common; perfumes are used to an increasing extent; tin trunks are purchased more freely. Otherwise there are few outward signs of the influx of wealth. It has no doubt facilitated the spread of education, especially amongst the Muhammadans and the lower castes of Hindus, and it has enabled the masses to make use of the railways, steamers and other means of communication. It has also led to increased expenditure on social ceremonies and on litigation. Where a European would use his increased wealth to secure still more wealth or greater comfort and a larger share in the amenities of life, the people of Rājshāhi, as of other parts of Bengal, try to secure freedom from trouble and toil. Certain it is that the first use which a cultivator makes of his money is to hire labourers or to sublet his land to tenants, and the next is to substitute for the cool thatch which needs periodical repair the corrugated iron which requires no looking after.

GENERAL
CONCLU-
SIONS.

The common labourers, domestic servants, and the lower classes of artisans have not been adversely affected by the rise in prices, for their wages have risen at least in proportion to the increased prices. It is the middle class (the *bhadralok*), depending as they do for their living largely on salaried posts or on the rents received from small intermediate tenures, who have suffered chiefly from the rise in prices. The effect of the rise in prices has been enhanced in their case by the spread of English education which has increased the competition for the posts available and has also, to a certain extent, raised the standard of living.



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER VIII.

INDUSTRIES AND TRADE.

The predominance of agriculture in the economic life of the district is very clearly brought out by the returns of occupations made at the census of 1911. These show that 1,170,000 persons or 79 per cent. of the population are supported by agriculture, 74,000 or 5 per cent. by industries, 64,000 or 4 per cent. by commerce, and 14,000 or 1 per cent. by professional pursuits. OCCUPA-
TIONS.

Of those who derive their livelihood from agriculture, 161,000 live on income derived from rent of agricultural land, *i.e.*, they consist of landlords and their families; of these under 6,000 are returned as workers, *i.e.*, are actual landlords. No less than 310,000 persons work as cultivators maintaining 740,000 dependants, while the number of farm servants, (*i.e.*, men permanently employed for cultivation) and field labourers, (*i.e.*, men employed temporarily, *e.g.*, for ploughing, weeding and harvesting) is 30,000 with 30,000 dependants. Taking the figures for actual workers, therefore, we find that there are approximately 60 cultivators to every landlord and only one farm labourer to every eleven cultivators. The disproportion between the latter two classes is very probably due to the fact that 30,000 more persons were returned as general labourers, and many of these were in all probability field labourers, for the latter often call themselves simply labourers. Even so these figures explain how it is that the district has to indent largely for imported labour. Those who subsist by pasture, *e.g.*, by keeping cattle or working as herdsmen, number 26,000, and those who subsist by fishing 18,000. In addition to these, 10,000 come under the category of fish dealers, so that the total of those maintained by the fisheries of the district is 28,000.

Nearly a fifth of those supported by industrial occupations earn their bread by rice pounding and husking, a domestic occupation followed by women. Silk spinning and weaving, once so important a factor in the economic life of the district, now supports only 3,000 people, of whom half are workers,

while there are only 2,500 supported by cotton spinning and weaving, of whom 1,200 are workers. The total number of those who come under the head of "Transport" is 16,000, of whom 4,000 are boat owners or boatmen and 3,500 are cart owners and cart drivers. Service in the police force and in the different branches of administration provides for 7,500 persons or about half the number maintained by professional pursuits.

The latter head, however, includes 5,000 priests and religious mendicants, and the number who are actually engaged in following professions and arts, as the terms are usually understood, is very small. The returns for actual workers are interesting as showing how small a fraction of the population are engaged in professional, artistic and scientific avocations, either because they are not sufficiently well educated or because they are debarred by want of means, opportunity or training, or by traditional custom from following them, or because they do not find them sufficiently attractive or lucrative.

Altogether 1,650 persons are returned as engaged in medical pursuits, but nearly 800 of them are ordinary midwives; the actual number of medical practitioners, including dentists, oculists and veterinary surgeons (who may be ignorant cattle doctors), is only 783. The legal profession has 252 adherents, including lawyers' clerk and touts, in addition to barristers, pleaders and mukhtārs, while those who are grouped together under the head "Letters, Arts, and Sciences," aggregate 1,544. This latter figure cannot be regarded as a large one, considering that there are nearly 1½ million persons in the district and that the head comprises a wide range of pursuits, *e.g.*, music, painting, acting, dancing, architecture, engineering, etc. It may be noted, moreover, that the great majority of those returned under this head consist of musicians, actors, dancers and singers, who have attained no high level in art.

Domestic service provides for 9,000 persons, and those depending on unproductive pursuits, such as beggars and prostitutes, number 20,000, of whom 13,000 are workers. No less than 8,000 of the latter are females, a number exceeded in only four other districts of Bengal, and the probability is that a large proportion of them are prostitutes: apart from the census figures, it is a known fact that prostitutes in Rājshāhi are very numerous and much sought after. The number of females actually engaged in disreputable occupations represents no less than one out of every eighty

females of all sorts, conditions and ages, a proportion which is the highest in all the districts of Bengal except Chittagong.

The statistics of occupations compiled from the returns made at the census, while indicating the main functional distribution of the people, furnish meagre information concerning individual industries and manufactures. To remedy this defect, an industrial census was held in 1911 concurrently with the general census, *i.e.*, the owners, managers and agents of industrial works, employing 20 persons or more, submitted returns in which, *inter alia*, the number of their employés at the date of the census was entered. These returns, of course, only referred to the state of affairs on the date of the census, when some concerns may have been closed and others not in full work, while others, on the other hand, may have had a larger number of operatives than usual. Even so, the results are sufficient to show, beyond possibility of a doubt, that there are few organized industries in the district, and that their operations have no pretence to magnitude. Altogether, there were only six concerns employing 1,252 persons, and of these four were silk filatures with 1,172 employés.

INDUS-
TRIAL
CENSUS

The silk industry was formerly of considerable importance, but is fast disappearing, while the cultivation and manufacture of indigo have been entirely given up. The ruins of old silk and indigo factories scattered about the district show however how important these two industries used to be. There are, now no large organized manufacturing industries, and the industrial classes are engaged in village handicrafts, which supply the every-day needs of their neighbours. Nor is this to be wondered at when agriculture is such a paying thing. I am informed that zamindari in this district yields 9 per cent. on the capital invested, and there is therefore no inducement for a man who has money to spare to sink it in exploiting industries which will yield a smaller rate of interest than he can obtain from landed property.

INDUS-
TRIES.

There is only one factory within the meaning of the Factories Act (*i.e.*, employing 50 hands or more). This is a jute press owned by Ralli Brothers at Atrai, which employs 100 operatives and turns out *cutcha* bales for the Calcutta market.

Factory
Industries

There is a small rice mill in Rāmpur Boālia belonging to a local contractor, which is also worked as a *surki* mill; and another rice mill has been recently started at Paba on the outskirts of the town by a local merchant. The

Rice Mills

buildings of the latter mill are on a large scale, but it is too early yet to say how far the venture will be a success. As a rule, rice is husked in the cultivator's own house by means of the *dhenki*, which is a heavy wooden beam worked by the foot. Rice intended for export is generally exported unhusked, the husking process being performed elsewhere by machinery at a greatly reduced cost.

Sugar
Mills.

An extensive business is done by Renwick and Company in the sale and hire of sugarcane mills and evaporating pans. The Company has a depôt at Lakshmanhâti in the Nātor subdivision, and lets out mills to the cultivators for the cane-crushing season. At the end of this, the mills are collected, cleaned, and repaired in preparation of the next season's work. These mills are roller mills, which are known as Bihia mills from their having been invented by Messrs. Burrows, Thomson and Mylne of Bihia in the district of Shāhābād. The usual practice is for several cultivators to combine to hire a mill between them, thus reducing the cost and ensuring a sufficient supply of cane to keep the mill fully employed. The mill is worked by a pair of bullocks walking in a circle. The juice is boiled in deep iron pans, the refuse cane, after it has been squeezed dry, being used as fuel for the fire. The finished product is a dark thick fluid (*gur*), which is poured into earthen jars, in which it is allowed to solidify. Most of the *gur* manufactured is consumed locally; this kind of raw sugar is a staple article of diet amongst the people of the district, and is largely consumed in the form of sweetmeats.

Brass and
Bell-metal.

Rājshāhi is one of the few districts in North and Eastern Bengal where the manufacture of brass and bell-metal is conducted on an extensive scale. The industry is carried on at Kalam and Buddhpāra Kalam in the Nātor subdivision; about 100 families in this former village and about 60 families in the latter make utensils of brass, bell-metal and an alloy called *bharan*: the last is a mixture of copper and zinc (in equal proportions) which is used for making tumblers. Brass vessels are made from imported brass plates, and bell-metal utensils by melting down the metal of old vessels. The artisans are both Hindu and Musalmān. The Hindu colony migrated from Murshidābād; the Muhammadan artisans, who have now set up independent shops, were originally workmen in the employ of the Hindu artisans. Moulds are used for the manufacture of tumblers and *lotas* or *ghatis*; the outer layer of the mould is of earth and the inner core is of metal. All other vessels and utensils are made by hammering.

The braziers and bell-metal workers, with the help of their hammers and furnaces, beat out the plates to any shape they want. After being beaten out to the required shape, the component parts are soldered together by means of an alloy of copper, zinc and borax, known as *pān*. The rough vessel is then turned in a lathe, to be chiselled and polished. This latter process is interesting. The bottom of the vessel is first heated and then fixed to a cylindrical piece of wood with resin; when it gets fixed, the bar of wood is made to revolve backwards with a piece of rope. One man (a cooly or a novice) works at the rope and the master brazier applies the chisel, a process which needs a good deal of skill. Then follows the process of polishing with the help of the lathe and a pad smeared over with an oily polish.

The industry is in the hands of *mahājans* who supply the workers with the raw material, *i.e.*, brass sheets and old bell-metal utensils, and take back the finished articles from them after paying them wages at fixed rates per seer of the manufactured article. The rates are Rs. 12 to Rs. 15 per maund for *bharan* and brass vessels, and from Rs. 20 to Rs. 50 according to quality, for bell-metal articles. Excluding his expenses, the earnings of the average worker average Rs. 8 to Rs. 12 per month.*

Fish abound in the rivers and *bils* and especially in the Ganges, Atrai and Chalan Bil. A considerable part of the rural population is engaged in fishing either for personal consumption or for trade. The value of the fish exported annually from the Chalan Bil is estimated at Rs. 60,000, and the value of the fisheries in the Ganges alone, within the Rājshāhi district, is calculated at about two lakhs a year. Every conceivable contrivance is employed, including many varieties of nets, night-lines, hooks, spears and bamboo traps. No close season is observed and the smallest fry are not spared. Fisheries.

In the eighteenth century the silk filatures of Rājshāhi were famous. The district was an emporium of the silk trade with a large export, and lucrative mulberry plantations covered a large area. The Dutch had a central factory (the present Bara Kothi) at Rāmpur Boālia, and the English exports were also very large, for Mr. Holwell, writing in 1759, mentions six kinds of cloth and raw silk as being exported from Nātor both to Europe and the markets of "Bussora, Mocha, Jedda, Pegu, Silk manufacture.

* G. N. Gupta, I.C.S., Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1908), pp. 39-41.

Acheen and Malacca ;" it is not quite clear whether all the manufactured cloths were made of silk.

After the British assumed the rule of the country, the East Indian Company devoted special attention to the development of the silk trade and maintained two head factories, one at Rāmpur Boālia and the other at Sardah. Each formed a Commercial Residency in charge of a Resident, whose duty it was to secure a certain "provision" of silk. The system worked by means of advances of cash to *paikārs* or middlemen, who purchased the cocoons from the rearers of silk worms : these advances formed the "investment." The cocoons when delivered were spun into silk at numerous filatures, some of which were hired, while others belonged to the Company itself. Advances were also occasionally made direct to the rearers of the worms, and those who took such advances were granted certain privileges, such as exemption from being summoned by the civil courts. Silk was not manufactured at the Company's establishments, but after being reeled off at the filatures was exported in its raw state.

In the year 1835 the Company gave up private trade, and its factories were sold off, passing into the hands of Messrs. Watson and Company, who also possessed several filatures of their own. Under their management the trade developed rapidly, and excellent raw silk was manufactured in large quantities, nearly the whole of it being exported to Europe. In 1871 the Collector reported that in Messrs. Watson and Company's factories employment was given to from 8,000 to 9,000 persons in the manufacture of raw silk alone, the capital invested in the undertaking being as much as 16 to 17 lakhs per annum. The total outturn of raw silk from both European and Indian filatures was estimated at about 400,000 lbs. or 180 tons valued at 37 lakhs per annum. The outturn from Messrs. Watson and Company's filatures alone was about 2,000 maunds, and a large business was also carried on by a French house, Messrs. Perrin and Company.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century the industry began to languish owing to the competition of other countries and diseases among the silk worms, and the outturn fell in 1898 to 155,000 lbs. or less than one-third of what it had been in 1871. Messrs. Watson and Company had now almost given up the trade, having only one filature at Sirail, but the Bengal Silk Company and Messrs. Louis Payen and Company (a French firm) had come into the field. The former Company

had factories at Sardah and Motihār with eight subordinate filatures, and the latter had factories at Kājla, Khojāpur and Sāhebganj. There were thus three companies with 14 concern producing about 70 tons of silk a year.

The manufacture of silk, has since steadily declined. The average production for the last three years of the nineteenth century was only 97,000 lbs. valued at Rs. 8,20,000, and by 1906-07 the outturn had fallen to 34,000 lbs. In 1909 the Pengal Silk Company closed its filatures and other European firms also gave up the business. The outturn accordingly fell in 1911 to 22,000 lbs. The effect of the collapse of the industry on the labour market is reflected in the census returns, for in 1901 the number of persons supported by silk weaving and spinning was 7,400 and in 1911 it had fallen to 3,000.*

The bulk of the Rājshāhi filature silk was exported to Europe, where it used to command a sale at prices somewhat lower than those paid for silk produced from continental worms. It was used largely in the manufacture of silk hats. The European filatures suffered from the competition of other nations, tariff duties and diseases among the silk worms, which reduced profits to a figure that no longer paid them. Disease among the silk worms has also hampered the native rearers to such an extent that nearly all have given up rearing cocoons as less profitable than the cultivation of jute.

There are no longer any European filatures, and the whole reeling of silk is done by Indians; yarn spun by the Indian method of reeling is called *khāmru* silk. The trade is now small, there being only three filatures at work, viz., at Bēlgharia, Khojāpur and Shamshādīpur (on the 9th mile of the Nator—Rampur Boalia road). The *khāmru* silk is not so uniform or so fine as in the filature system, and is more difficult to unwind than filature silk. Mr. N. G. Mukharji, however, points out that, on the whole, it is less expensive to reel silk according to the native method than according to the filature system, because the yield of *khāmru* silk is larger, while the establishment charges of European factories are much greater. Thus the manufacture of *khāmru* silk proves more profitable to the reeler than that of filature silk notwithstanding the higher price which can be obtained for the latter.†

* The total number supported by all branches of the industry, e.g., rearing silk worms, gathering cocoons, spinning, weaving and dyeing silk, was 80,000 in 1901.

† N. G. Mukharji, *Monograph on the Silk Fabrics of Bengal*, 1903.

Matka silk. The *matka* cloths turned out by the Rājshāhi weavers have a good reputation; pierced and waste silk woven by the native method is called *matka*. The weavers live in several villages near Dākra (6 miles south-east of Chārgḥāt) and Mīrganj, viz., Raipur (1 mile south of Dākra), Chandanshahar, Hazrahāti, Nandangāchhi and Pānikāmra. Their fabrics, which are known as Dākra *matkas*, though none are woven at Dākra itself, have a reputation for excellence, some being so fine that they look like fabrics made of reeled silk. The raw silk is obtained partly from Mālda and partly from cocoons reared locally. *Khāmru* silk is occasionally mixed with *matka* thread for turning out *matkas* of superior quality for special orders.

An attempt was made some years ago by a gentleman of Rāmpur Boālia, Babu Akshay Kumar Maitra, to develop the industry and improve the position of the weavers by introducing and popularizing the use of the fly-shuttle loom. His efforts were, however, unsuccessful. His account of the steps he took is as follows: "I was directed by the Government of the late lamented Sir John Woodburn to carry on certain experiments with a view to ascertain how far the fly-shuttle loom was really suited to silk weaving. I brought a loom from Kushtia, and subsequently made a few specimen looms of the type in the school, and carried on experiments with them in weaving, (1) silk, (2) silk waste, commonly called *matka*, (3) mixed fabrics of silk and *matka*, (4) of *matka* and cotton. But I found the fly-shuttle loom useful only under efficient management in weaving wrappers and gown pieces with warp of *matka* thread, woven with weft of *matka* or of silk cotton. A piece so woven at the school, with warp of silk, was presented to Sir John Woodburn, and similar pieces were sold at Rs. 2 per yard. There is an increasing market for such stuff, and I had offers from Australia, as the stuff looked like *endi*, commonly called "Assam silk." But I found to my regret that the profits would not pay the capitalist, although they might help the *matka* weaver to make a little more than what he did with his old loom. I tried to induce the *matka* weavers of Rājshāhi to adopt the "fly-shuttle loom," but they then preferred, and still prefer, their old loom."

The Sericultural School at Rāmpur Boālia, to which reference is made in the above extract, was established in 1897 with the object of turning out trained sericultural overseers and training the sons of rearers in methods of seed examination. A silk nursery (for rearing healthy silk worms) has also been

started by Government at Mīrganj, on the 19th mile of the Pābna Road, the buildings of an old indigo factory being utilized for the purpose.

Other industries are of little importance. Cotton weaving is a decadent village handicraft, giving employment to only 1,200 persons. Cotton cloths are printed and dyed at Rāmpur Boālia. Pottery for domestic use, and brick rings for earthen wells are made at Kalam in the Nītor subdivision. Reed mats are made for local use at Naogāon. There is a *surki* mill at Rāmpur Boālia belonging to a local contractor which employs 20 persons and another at Dighāpatia belonging to Messrs. Mitra and Company.

Other industries.

Indigo was once a product of the first rank in Rājshāhi. The industry was in the hands of Messrs. Watson and Company, and the crop was mainly grown on the alluvial lands along the Ganges and on the *chars*. In 1896 there were 8,000 acres under indigo, but since then its cultivation has been abandoned owing to the competition of the synthetic dye and of ordinary country crops. The sole vestiges of the industry are the ruins of indigo works and vats scattered about the district, generally with casuarina trees about them, which the indigo planters introduced.

Indigo.

Forty years ago almost all the centres of trade were situated on the banks of rivers; but since the opening of the railway, trade has naturally tended to concentrate in the neighbourhood of the railway stations. As, however, there is no railway in the whole of the western portion of the district, the river-borne trade is still of importance, and some of the largest markets are situated on the banks of rivers, *e.g.*, Rāmpur Boālia and Godāgāri on the Padma; Atrai on the Atrai, Changdhupail and Gurudāspur on the Baral, Kāliganj on one of the feeders of the Chalan Bil, and Naogāon on the Jamuna.

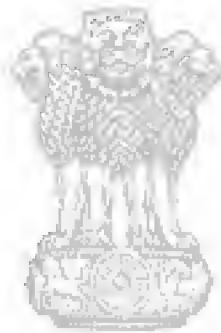
TRADE.

A large amount of trade is carried on at village *hāts* or markets, which are held on fixed days, once or twice or thrice a week. The *hāt* is usually held in an open space, where vendors from the neighbouring villages and petty traders from a distance sell their goods. They either sit on the ground with their wares set out before them, or occupy open sheds or booths with corrugated iron or thatched roofs. Around the central space are the houses of the permanent shop-keepers, who deal in salt, kerosine oil, piece-goods, metal utensils and other imported goods. In the central space business is transacted in all kinds of country produce, rice, vegetables, spices,

Meṭās and Hāts.

betel, tobacco, fruit, fish and earthenware. Here the villager disposes of his surplus produce and obtains what he needs himself. The more important *hāts* are also frequented by the brokers (*dalāls* or *puikārs*) of merchants dealing in country produce. These markets belong to the zamindars, who charge the vendors fees for the right to sell their goods. In addition, to the fees realised from the vendors, the zamindars' servants (*quibs* and *muharrirs*) levy a toll in kind from the stalls of fruit, vegetable and fish vendors, which is commonly known as *tolā* (literally picked up, *i.e.*, a levy).

A considerable amount of business is also transacted at annual *melās* or religious fairs. The most important of these are those held at Khetur and Mānda, which take place in October and April, respectively, and are attended by twenty thousand to thirty thousand persons. The fairs are in fact temporary centres of trade.



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

THE northern section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway RAIL-
WAYS. *i.e.*, the section from the Ganges to Siliguri, passes through the Nātor subdivision and a small part of the Naogāon subdivision. The total length within the district is 40 miles and the stations (with the distances between them) proceeding from the south to north are as shown in the margin. After Rāninagar the railway runs through the Fogra district, but close to the western boundary of Rājshāhi, and there are three stations within easy reach of places in the Naogāon subdivision, viz., (going from south to north) Sāntahār, Tilakpur and Akkepur. Sāntahār, which is only just outside the district boundary, is the junction for the Kaunia-Sāntahār loop line, which goes off to Fogra on the east and thence to Kaunia and Lalmanirhāt. Till 1915 the line was on the metre gauge, but since the bridging of the Ganges the broad gauge has been extended to Sāntahār.

In the extreme south-west of the district there is a short length of the Godāgāri-Katihār extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway. The terminus is at Godāgāri, from which a short length of line branches to Godāgāri Ghāt on the Padma : from the latter station a ferry steamer plies to Lāl-gola Ghāt, thus ensuring communication with Berhampore and Calcutta. On the north the line passes through Mālda to Katihār. The length of the line in Rājshāhi is very short, being about 11 miles, and there are only three stations, viz., Godāgāri Ghāt on the riverside, Godāgāri in the village itself, and Digrām six miles further on. The stations to the north are not far from the boundary and can be reached from places in the district. They are Amnura (not far from Jhelim), Nachaul and Rohanpur. Owing to the formation of a *char* opposite Godāgāri, which prevents steamers from getting into the bank, the terminus was shifted in 1915 from Godāgāri to Bargāchhi 5 miles down the Ganges, the new station taking the old name of Godāgāri Ghāt.

A glance at the map will show that there is no railway in the wide stretch of country between these two lines. Three

schemes have been proposed for opening up this tract. The first contemplates the construction of a branch line from Sāntahār through the Naogāon subdivision to Rohanpur in the Mālda district. The other two are alternative schemes for a line across the south of the district, which would give Rāmpur Boālia the railway communication which it at present lacks. The first proposal is for a broad gauge line from Nātor through Rāmpur Boālia and thence to Godāgāri. The second is for a line from Ishurdih through Rāmpur Boālia to Nachaul on the Godāgāri-Katihār Railway, 21 miles north of Godāgāri. The survey of both lines has been made and estimates have been prepared, but the adoption of either has been prevented by the financial stringency caused by the war.

ROADS.

The construction and maintenance of roads in Rājshāhi present considerable difficulties owing to the physical features of the country. Large areas are swampy and water-logged, the water lying in them to a considerable depth during the rains. In such areas roads can only be made at great expense as high embankments are necessary. Their upkeep is also difficult, because the borrow-pits, from which the earth is taken to make the embankment, remain full of water till late in the year, and they can only be utilised during the comparatively short time that they are dry. There are, moreover, numerous water-courses and rivers which require large and expensive bridges. Lastly, the soil is composed of alluvium, and there is no stone. The construction and maintenance of metalled roads consequently involve heavy expenditure, as all the metal has to be imported either from Jainti on the north or the Rājmahal Hills on the west.

Altogether the District Board maintains 45 miles of metalled roads and 505 miles of unmetalled roads besides 928 miles of village roads, which are mere fair-weather tracks. Many of the unmetalled roads are little better. Being composed of soft friable earth, they are covered deep with dust during the dry weather, and during the rains the earth is converted into liquid mud. One portion of the district is still very badly provided with roads. This is the Barind, where roads are few and far between. It is a great rice-producing tract with a large export, and the absence of roads is got over by cutting the small ridges between the fields after the rice has been harvested and then driving carts over the open country.

The only metalled roads are (1) from Rāmpur Boālia to Nātor, (2) from Rāmpur Boālia to Nahāta, (3) from Sāntahār railway station to Naogāon, (4) part of the Pābna road from

Rāmpur Boālia, and (5) a short length from Nātor to Dighapatia on the outskirts of Nātor. Another road is now being metalled, viz., that from Lālpur to Gopālpur railway station.

The following is a brief account of the important roads :—

The Nātor road, 30 miles long, is the most important road in the district, as it connects the head-quarters station of Rāmpur Boālia with the railway and is the only metalled road of any considerable strength. It starts from the catcherry at Rāmpur Boālia, passes through the town in a tortuous way, and then runs almost due east to the railway station at Nātor (28 miles) and terminates in the town of Nātor 2 miles further on. A considerable length of the road runs through low marshy country, and here the road runs on the top of a high embankment. At Jhalmalia on the 21st mile there is a high long bridge over the river Musakhān, on the bank of which there is an inspection bungalow. More than one passenger motor service has been started on the road, but so far none has been a real success. Most persons travel on the "tum-tum" of the district; this is a small pony-drawn springed cart on which passengers sit on a kind of wooden tray, a little higher than the driver's seat, which is on the level of the shafts.

Nātor road.

The Nahāta road, 6½ miles long, runs from Rāmpur Boālia to Nahāta and is metalled throughout. At the latter place it meets the Bārālai river, which is unbridged. The continuation of the road northwards to Saipāra and thence to Mānda is unmetalled. This road is an important outlet for the grain traffic of the north of the district, which comes down to Nahāta both by river and road.

Nahāta road.

The Mālda road runs from Rāmpur Boālia to the boundary of the Mālda district (23½ miles) on the west. For the first 2½ miles it is carried along the top of the Public Works Department embankment, which protects Rāmpur Boālia from the floods of the Ganges and then it runs close to the river passing through Premtah (11 miles), Pargāchhi (13 miles) and Godāgāri (19 miles). The remainder of the road is in bad order. It passes over an unbridged *khāl* at Abhaya and runs through Sultānganj, following the left bank of the Mahānanda.

Mālda road.

The Pābna road is another road running from Rāmpur Boālia, which is laid down close to or along the Ganges. Its total length is 35½ miles and it follows a south-easterly direction to the border of the Pābna district. It takes off from the Nātor road on the outskirts of Rāmpur Boālia and is metalled as far as the Achintala Khāl on the 8th mile. It then runs close to the Ganges as far as Sardah 13 miles from Rāmpur Boālia ;

Pābna road.

this length is exposed to the encroachments of the Ganges and various sections have been swept away, so that diversions have had to be made, *i.e.*, new alignments are made further inland. A mile beyond Sardah it comes to Chārghāt on the Baral river, which is unbridged, and thence viâ Mirganj, Bāgha and Bilmaria to Lālpur on the 36th mile.

Dinājpur
road.

The Dinājpur road starts from Godāgāri on the Ganges and runs northwards into the Mālda district and thence, after a short passage through a projecting corner of Rājshāhi, into Dinājpur. Its total length in the district (including both sections) is 16 miles. It bears a heavy traffic, being the chief road by which the grain-laden carts of the Barind make their way to the Ganges. This road was built during the early days of British rule and was the main route from Murshidābād to Darjeeling. It is hence described by Major Sherwill in his *Report on the Dinajpur District* (1863) as "the Darjeeling high road, which connects the Sikkim-Himalaya mountains with the great Gangetic valley :—" "This line of road," he wrote, "has been well chosen. From the Ganges to Kantnuggur on the Pooranababa (or Dhapa), a distance of 100 miles, there is no nullah of any importance. It is a raised earthen road, kept in good repair and is practicable at all seasons for wheeled carriage, except the worst part of the rains. The small water-courses are bridged over. This used to be the road taken by *dāk* travellers proceeding from Calcutta to Darjeeling; but since the opening of the railway to Rajmahal and Monghyr, it is nearly deserted for the more direct road *via* Carragola Ghat and Purneah high road." In Dinājpur, the portion north of the town of Dinājpur is still called the Darjeeling road, and that to the south the Murshidābād road, as it connects with Murshidābād by means of the ferry across the Ganges at Godāgāri.

Bogra
road.

The Bogra road runs north-eastward from Nātor to the boundary of the Bogra district, a total length of 28 miles. The first two miles are metalled, *i.e.*, as far as Dighāpatia, and the remainder is unmetalled. It passes over three unbridged rivers in the first 13 miles, viz., at Bagsar, Sherkol and Singra. The first is a silted up channel of the southern branch of the Atrai, over which a temporary bridge is constructed in the dry season; the other two, viz., the Bārālai and Gur, are provided with ferries. Beyond Singra (13 miles) the road is embanked for 1 mile and then disappears altogether. The embankment projects into the Henān or Hiāla Bil, where the water stands 10 feet deep in the rains. This *bil* dries up in January and

can then be crossed by carts, but during the rains, and for several months after their cessation, boats are the only means of transport. The road re-appears at Chaugrām, 3 miles further on, and then runs over high land through Ranbāgha to Nandigrām (26 miles) and passes into the Bogra district, two miles further on. This is an old road which is shown in the Thāk map as "Company's *Sarak*," while in the Revenue Survey maps it is marked as a "high road," as distinguished from less important roads and from old roads which had gone out of use.

Road traffic is gradually increasing as the natural water-courses silt up, but during the rains the roads in low-lying areas are scarcely practicable for wheeled traffic; and there are large tracts with no roads but with a net-work of water-courses. Rivers and streams therefore still provide the chief means of internal communication, especially during the rains, when there are few villages in the north and east of the district which cannot be approached by water. The country is in fact flooded, and there is a net-work of streams and water-courses which are navigable by boats of considerable burthen.

The following statement of police-stations that can be reached by steam-launch during the whole year and during the rains only may be of service to touring officers :—

| Subdivision | Throughout the year. | In the rains. |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Sadar ... { | Boālia. Chārgḥāt Godāgāri | { Bāgmāra. Pūthia (up to Jhalmalia 3 miles from Puthia). Rājāpur. |
| Nātor ... { | | { Bāgātipāra. Baraigrām. Gurudāspur. Nātor (up to Dighapatia 2 miles from Nātor). Singra. Wālia. |
| Naogāon ... { | | { Badalgāchhi. Mahādebpur. Mānda. Nandanāli. Naogāon. Pānchapur. |

WATER
COMMUNI-
CATIONS.

It should be added that Badalgāchhi, Mahādebpur, Mānda, Naogāon and Nandanāli can only be reached if the steam-launch is small enough to pass under the railway bridge at Atrai; this has a clearance of 13 or 14 feet above the water-level.

Steamer
services.

A daily steamer service worked jointly by the Rivers Steam Navigation Company and the India General Navigation and Railway Company plies between Lālgola Ghāt and Chārgḥāt. The places at which it puts in are (from west to east) Premtali, Patibona (near Maricha in the district of Murshidabad), Rāmpur Boālia and Sardah; the Agent of the Joint Companies has his head-quarters at Rāmpur Boālia. Till May 1915 the steamers used to run beyond Chārgḥāt as far as Damukdia Ghāt touching *en route* at Mīrganj, Jalangi Ghāt and Bengāri. At Damukdia Ghāt there was a connection with the Eastern Bengal State Railway, but since the opening of the bridge across the Ganges this connection has ceased and the run of the steamers has been consequently cut short. There is also a daily service from Lālgola Ghāt up the Mahānanda to Mālda. The large cargo steamers of the Ganges Despatch Service from Goālundo to Digha (near Pātna) also work along the Ganges. They call at Rāmpur Boālia and Godāgāri on the second day of the journey from Goālundo, and at Lālgola Ghāt and Rāmpur Boālia on the ninth day of the downward journey from Digha. They also put in for cargo at Chārgḥāt. Kalidaskhāli 3 miles east of Rājāpur, and Bengāri 6 miles east of the same place.

Boats.

Boats of many kinds ply on the Ganges and other rivers, and all that can be attempted is a very brief mention of the principal kinds. The most primitive is the *donga*, which is a dugout made from the *tāl* (palm) tree. Another rude kind of boat called *saranga* is used in small rivers and marshes. It is hollowed out from the trunk of a large tree into the shape of a flat square-ended punt and is propelled by a pole or bamboo. The commonest boat (in the proper sense of the word) is the *dīngi*, which is made of planks and serves both for fishing and the conveyance of passengers. The *kosha* is a larger boat used for cargo; it is long and narrow in shape. The *pānsi* is built like the *dīngi*, but is covered with a mat roof from the stern to the mast.

No account of the boats of the district would be complete without the mention of the *chāri* or *nād*. This is nothing more nor less than a large shallow round bowl, which is exactly like a coracle except that it is made of earthenware. It is used to cross *bils* and nullahs and requires expert knowledge in order to propel it.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

WHEN the British took over the revenue administration of Bengal, Rājshāhi formed an immense zamindari, or private estate, belonging to the Nātor Raja, who was alone responsible for the payment of the land revenue. The average annual demand in the four years 1766-70 was Rs. 27,02,000 (sicca), but the figure had fallen to Rs. 22,86,000 (sicca) in 1778-9, when the proprietor was the celebrated Rani Bhawāni. The estate, it must be remembered, included not only the present district, but also large portions of other districts both to the south and to the north of the Ganges. The lavish munificence and charity of the Rani caused her to fall in arrears with her revenue, and the Government was compelled to take the collection out of her hands. For a succession of years the zamindari was either held *khāṣ*, i.e., under the direct management of the State, or was farmed out to revenue contractors. At the decennial settlement in 1790, the adopted son of the Rani, Raja Rāmkrishna, was permitted to engage for the whole district at a permanent assessment of Rs. 23,28,000 (sicca). The strict regulations, however, which were then introduced for the recovery of revenue arrears by sale of the defaulters' estate, were constantly called into requisition against the Raja. Portion after portion of his property was put up to auction and knocked down either to strangers from Calcutta or to the dependants whom his own laxity had enriched. Some portions moreover had already been made into *tālūks*, for landholders at that time when compelled by necessity to raise money did not create sub-tenures at fixed rates of rent, but sold part of their property, which thus became an independent *tālūk*. At the time of the Permanent Settlement numbers of these *tālūkdārs* were declared independent of the zamindar, and

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entitled to hold their lands and pay the Government rental direct into the district treasury instead of through the zamindar as heretofore.

The result of all these separations was that in 1800-01 the district comprised 1,603 separate estates paying a total land revenue of Rs. 14,71,450. The average land revenue payable by each estate was Rs. 918, and only 141 out of the 1,603 estates were returned as paying a Government revenue exceeding Rs. 1,000 per annum. The decrease of the total land revenue of the district in 1800-1 as compared with 1790 was due to the separation of the large tract known as Nij Rājshāhi, which in 1793 was divided among the districts to the south of the Ganges. Subdivision of property has since gone on rapidly, although perhaps not to so great an extent as in some other Bengal districts. In 1850-51 the total number of estates in the district amounted to 1813, possessed by 4,550 registered proprietors, and the land revenue to Rs. 11,76,000. The total number of estates in 1870-71 had fallen to 1721 and the land revenue demand was reduced to Rs. 10,35,000, but this decrease was due to the reduced area of the district. On the other hand, the number of registered proprietors had increased to 5,492. The subsequent fluctuations have not been great, the collections being Rs. 9,25,000 in 1880-81, Rs. 9,04,000 in 1890-91, Rs. 10,26,000 in 1900-01, and Rs. 10,22,000 in 1910-11.

According to the returns for 1914-15, there are 1,682 estates on the tauzi roll, and the total

| Class. | No. | Demand. |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|
| Permanently-settled | 1,632 | Rs. 10,07,000 |
| Temporarily " | 18 | 2,000 |
| Government estates | 32 | 9,000 |

current demand is Rs. 10,18,000: at least half of them are small estates paying less than Rs. 100 as land revenue. Details of each class of estates are given in

the margin.

The number of estates assessed to road and public works cesses is 4,511, viz., 3,686 revenue-paying estates, 171 rent-free estates and 664 rent-free tenures. The number of recorded shareholders of these estates is 9,223, so that there are approximately two shareholders to each estate. There are also 14,629 tenures assessed to cesses with 16,201 shareholders. The gross rental of the district is 39 lakhs, so that the land revenue is only about one-fourth of the assets.

Government is a large landed proprietor holding no less than 21 estates, of which the greater number are *diāra* estates in the Ganges. Government owns the latter by virtue of the law

that land in the bed of a navigable river between its fixed banks is public domain.

| Sub-division. | ESTATE. | Area (acres). | Number of tenants. |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Sadar ... | Bāghāta ... | 12 | 18 |
| Do. ... | Barnes Char (Part I) ... | 41 | 16 |
| Do. ... | Barnes Char (Part II) ... | 83 | 29 |
| Do. ... | Bulanpur ... | 63 | 11 |
| Do. ... | Chabbisnagar ... | 210 | 95 |
| Do. ... | Huzrapur ... | 205 | 58 |
| Do. ... | Isalpur ... | 356 | Unassessed. |
| Do. ... | Jhaubona ... | 1,347 | 227 |
| Do. ... | Khidirpur Char ... | 3,889 | 52 |
| Do. ... | Khidirpur Dār ... | 687 | 347 |
| Do. ... | Kotālipāra ... | 36 | 10 |
| Do. ... | Nabinagar ... | 520 | 265 |
| Do. ... | Nirmal Char ... | 2,799 | 93 |
| Do. ... | Nausera ... | 1,699 | Not available. |
| Do. ... | Nausera Sultānpur ... | 655 | 40 |
| Do. ... | Sonaikāndi Jājira Char ... | 962 | 190 |
| Do. ... | Sfrānpur ... | 1,482 | 68 |
| Do. ... | Syāmpur Char ... | 563 | 86 |
| Do. ... | Titamāri ... | 290 | 117 |
| Nātor ... | Jaykrishna Chak ... | 3 | 1 |
| Naogāon ... | Sastidāsbatī ... | 7 | 16 |

There are also 9 resumed proprietary estates held by Government as shown below:—

| Sub-division. | ESTATE. | Area (acres). | Number of tenants. |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Sadar ... | Asai Jot ... | 106 | 25 |
| Do. ... | Asai Lupta Payasti Jot ... | 60 | 17 |
| Do. ... | Gopālpur ... | ... | Under water and unassessed. |
| Do. ... | Muktāpur ... | ... | |
| Do. ... | Nausera Sultānpur ... | 182 | 23 |
| Do. ... | Sonaikāndi Char ... | 428 | Unassessed. |
| Nātor ... | Kachutia ... | 22 | 14 |
| Do. ... | Kaigāon Bingāon ... | 108 | 37 |
| Do. ... | Tālam Ratail ... | 78 | 22 |

There are nine main varieties of rent-free tenures as follows :—(1) *aima*, (2) *madadmāsh*, (3) *debottar*, (4) *brahmottar*, (5) *pārpāl*, (6) *mahatran*, (7) *bhogottar*, (8) service tenures of various kinds and (9) *heba* tenures. These rent-free tenures may be subdivided, with reference to the purpose for which they

RENT-FREE TENURES.

were granted, into (a) those granted for religious purposes, and (b) those granted for the benefit of individuals or families. There may also be a cross-classification of these tenures, between those of Hindu and those of Muhammadan creation.

Aimas.

Aima estates are tenures originally granted by the Mughal Government, either rent-free or subject to a small quit-rent, to learned or pious Musalmāns, or for religious and charitable uses in connection with the Muhammadan religion. These tenures existed long before the Company's accession to the Diwāni, and have always been recognised by the British Government as hereditary and transferable. The large *aima* estate of Bāgha near Bilmāria is a Muhammadan grant, which was conferred direct by one of the Delhi Emperors.

Pīrpāl.

Pīrpāl lands are small endowments for the maintenance of tombs (*dargāh*) and mosques, and are met with in almost every village. Although the grants are for the endowment of Muhammadan institutions, they have in many instances been made by Hindu zamindars for the requirements of the Muhammadan population of their villages.

*Debottar,
brahmot-
tar,
bhogottar
and
mahattran.*

Many of the Hindu religious rent-free tenures, such as *debottar*, *brahmottar*, *bhogottar*, and *mahattran*, have been created by zamindars subsequent to the Permanent Settlement, while others date back to the days of the Mughal Emperors. The celebrated Rani Bhawāni of Nātor created many of these tenures. *Debottar* lands are rent-free grants for the purpose of the worship of the gods, and *brahmottar* lands for the maintenance of Brahmans. *Bhogottar* and *mahattran* tenures are created by the zamindars for the maintenance of relations, or for respectable persons other than Brahmans; but they are few in number in this district. The difference between *mahattran* and *bhogottar* estates is that the former are hereditary, while the latter are generally limited to the life-time of the grantees.

*Service
tenures.*

Service tenures are very numerous in Rājshāhi. They are lands granted by the zamindars in favour of persons of whose services they avail themselves. The grantees receive no pay, but hold their land rent-free in return for the services they render. The tenures are not, as a rule, hereditary, and are never transferable; they are cancelled when the service ends, either on the failure of male members of the tenure-holder's family, or when the necessity for service towards the grantor comes to an end.

Hebas.

Heba properties are tenures which, in a few instances, heads of zamindari families have created in favour of one or other of

the female members of their families. Some tenures of this description are held by females from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, and so on, in succession.

"There is" remarks the Settlement Officer in his Annual Report for 1912-13, "a very large number of *lākhirāj* holdings in Rājshāhi district. *Brahmottars* and *debottars* were given very freely at the time of Rani Bhawāni, many by herself and many in imitation of what she was doing. There are no less than 38,000 *taidāds* that were filed in the Collectorate under the two *Lākhirāj* Regulations. Many of these do not belong to the present Rājshāhi district, for the collection does not seem to have been broken when other districts were split off from the original Rājshāhi. There are the records of 1092 resumption cases in the Collectorate. Before a resumption case could be taken up now, it would be necessary to examine all the 38,000 *taidāds*, to find whether a *taidād* for the particular *lākhirāj* under examination had been filed, and also all the former resumption cases to see whether a case had been taken up and dropped. As the *taidāds*, which are often in old Persian hand writing, contain the names of villages and thanas as they existed a hundred years ago, and as any *taidād* might belong to a village now in Dinājpur, Bogra or Pābna, instead of to a village in Rājshāhi, it can hardly be imagined how difficult the task of identifying the *taidād* land would be."

Prior to the Permanent Settlement the zamindars, having no fixed interest in their estates, could not create sub-tenures at a fixed rate of rent as at present. At that time, when compelled by necessity to raise money, they had to sell a portion of their property, which thus became an independent *tāluk*. This was greatly to the advantage of the cultivators, inasmuch as their relations were directly with the zamindars, and they had not to bear the pressure of a gradation of landlords. Nearly all the middlemen's tenures at fixed rates have either originated or acquired a settled character subsequent to the Permanent Settlement.

RENT-
PAYING
TENURES.

The *patni tāluks* represent the highest class of subordinate tenures. Prior to 1819 very few *patnis* existed in the district, there being many difficulties to hinder the creation of such sub-tenures by the zamindars. Regulation VIII of 1819 facilitated the creation of *patnis* and the various subordinate tenures of the same nature such as *dār-patnis* and *se-patnis*. Briefly, *patnidārs* may be said to stand in the position of actual proprietors, with the exception that they pay rent to the zamindar. The most distinctive incident of these tenures is

Patni
tenures.

that they are liable to be sold summarily for arrears of rent at the instance of the zamindar, just as revenue-paying estates are sold by Government for arrears of revenue.

Other
tenures.

Other intermediate tenures, viz., *shikmi*, *kaimi*, *mukar-rari*, *istimrāri* and *maurusī*, etc., are hereditary, held at a fixed rate of rent, and are, in the majority of cases, transferable. As in *patnis*, sub-infeudation is carried on in these intermediate permanent tenures. In each case the character of the sub-tenures is the same as that of the one immediately above it, the only differences being in the amount of rent and the medium through which it is payable.

Farming leases (*ijāra*) for specific periods to middlemen are common. Tenures called *zar-ī-peshgi* leases occasionally occur. The creation of this latter description of holding arises out of money transactions, in which the owner of the property borrows a sum of money, and in return gives a lease of the estate or holding to the lender, who enjoys the proceeds until the debt and interest are liquidated.

Huzuri
jot.

A description of cultivation tenures known as *huzuri jot* differs from other raiyati holdings, in the circumstance that the cultivator pays his rent direct to the zamindar and not through the *tahsildār* or *gomāsta*. This is a privilege granted to the principal tenant in a village by way of distinction.

Sankārāri

A curious tenancy met with in the Nātor subdivision is called *sankārāri*. It applies only to land sown with *boro*, or summer paddy, in the *bils* north of Nātor. The area of the *bil* under the crop is measured each year and the rent paid according to the results of the measurement.

Bhāg-
khājana

There is a modification of this system called *bhāg-khājana* under which the tenant pays one-fourth of the crop *plus* a money rent, the idea being that as the cultivator will have to pay a fixed sum of money as part of his rent, he will take more trouble over cultivation and so enhance the value of the fourth share of the produce that goes to his landlords. This tenancy is common in the south of the Nātor subdivision.

LAND-
LORDS
AND
TENANTS.

Some of the largest landlords in Rājshāhi come of old families, such as the Tāhirpur Rāj, the Puthia Rāj, the Nātor Rāj, the Dighāpatia Rāj and the Dubalhāti Rāj. They exercise considerable power over their tenantry, which is very largely due to their prestige and the force of tradition. Other landlords, who are comparatively new comers or *nouveaux riches*, have a power which would astonish persons accustomed to the independence of raiyats in other parts of India. Nearly all

large zamindars are in fact local magnates. A significant example of the power exercised by landlords is the system of zamindari *bichārs* or trials, at which cases occurring on their estates are heard and decided. Such cases are not confined to disputes about lands, but may also include matters of a criminal nature. The authority of the landlord to hear and decide such cases is recognised and rarely disputed; and it must be admitted that in one way the *bichārs* serve a useful purpose, for the cases are heard promptly and the parties are saved the delay and expense incidental to regular trials in the criminal courts at a distant head-quarters. The zamindari *bichār* is, in fact, often the modern substitute for the old village tribunal.

At the same time the system is liable to abuse. Crimes are often hushed up. Even when they are reported to the police, the parties go first to the zamindari cutcherry and the delay caused by this prevents prompt investigation and the discovery of clues. In most cases, too, zamindars are absentees and they leave the adjudication of disputes to their Naibs. Many of the Naibs are unscrupulous and avaricious, taking a good share of the fines imposed; it is for this reason that it is said that "Naibs live like Nawābs." The fines imposed are often heavier than a criminal court would impose in view of the slender means of the parties. The majority of the Naibs are, moreover, Hindus, who have little sympathy with Muhammadan tenants.

In some estates there is a regular hierarchy of courts, an appeal lying from the Naib to the Diwān or Manager and from the latter to the proprietor himself, just like a court of first instance, a Judge and the High Court.

In Chapter VII an account had been given of the way in which zamindars enhance their tenants' rents, from which it will be clear that the landlords have almost made a dead letter of the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act, which have been designed for the protection of the raiyats. Further evidence of the subservient condition of the peasantry is given in the Rājshāhi Settlement Report for 1912-13. This report refers only to the Naogaon subdivision, but the state of affairs described, so far from being exceptional, is quite general.

"The most remarkable feature of the relations between landlords and tenants is the submission of the tenants and the respect they retain for their landlords. Unjust exactions in rent as *abwābs* are the rule, but cases where the tenants resist these are practically unknown. The tenants refuse to

fight. They know the power of the zamindars' agents and are ignorant or afraid of the law which exists for their protection. Everywhere the landlords exercise, personally or through their managers and naibs, a large civil and criminal jurisdiction. As a rule, where the landlords' private interests are not affected, decisions are roughly just and are seldom disputed. Where these powers are wielded by the unscrupulous naib of an absentee landlord, the state of the tenants is unhappy.

"The worst offenders are petty landlords, especially those who are professional money-lenders. Such landlords have no conception of the duties of a landed proprietor to his tenants, and they stoop to all sorts of petty knavery in order to increase their wealth. *Salāmi* is taken from two different tenants for the same land; every artifice is employed to dispossess a raiyat, in order to let the land on half-produce rent. A widow, a minor or female heir has a doubtful chance of succeeding to the raiyati holding. A distant collateral is never recognized."

Commenting on this, the Director of Land Records* remarks: "The absentee landlord, the Settlement Officer reports, is one of the main causes of oppression. He leaves his reputation in the hands of unscrupulous and oppressive agents, who make their master's name hateful in the ears of the tenants. The total *abwābs* vary from 4 annas to 9 annas per rupee of rent. In the large estates, where regular exactions are made of fixed amounts and at fixed times, these exactions are less harassing than those which belong to the class of pure and simple extortion. In the latter class I would put the worthy gentleman who, having a house to build, has collected Rs. 16,000 towards it from his tenants; the far-seeing gentleman who, having to fight his tenants in the settlement courts, tried to collect annas 6-9 per rupee of rent from them beforehand to pay his costs; the needy soul, with a son in England, who makes regular collections for his education; and the enlightened estate which extorted Rs. 16,000 out of the tenants of a newly-purchased property by the threat of a general enhancement of rent."

In only one large estate have the tenants asserted themselves. This is an estate where there has already been a record-of-rights. This is no doubt the reason why they have asserted their rights, submitted to no illegal exactions and found a leader. It must not be imagined that a powerful landlord is always

* Report on Survey and Settlement Operations in Bengal for 1913-14.

oppressive and uncharitable. A striking instance to the contrary is given in the Settlement Officer's account of the estate of Rabindra Nath Tagore, the Bengali poet, whose fame is world-wide. It is clear that to poetical genius he adds practical and beneficial ideas of estate management, which should be an example to the local zamindars.

"A very favourable example of estate government is shown in the property of the poet, Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore. The proprietors brook no rivals. Sub-infeudation within the estate is forbidden; raiyats are not allowed to sublet on pain of ejection. There are three divisions of the estate, each under a Sub-Manager with a staff of *tahsildārs*, whose accounts are strictly supervised. Half of the *dākhilas* are checked by an officer of the head office. Employés are expected to deal fairly with the raiyats, and unpopularity earns dismissal. Registration of transfer is granted on a fixed fee, but is refused in the case of an undesirable transferee. Remissions of rent are granted, when inability to pay is proved. In 1312 it is said that the amount remitted was Rs. 57,595. There are lower primary schools in each division; and at Patisar, the centre of management, there is a High English School with 250 students and a charitable dispensary. These are maintained out of a fund to which the estate contributes annually Rs. 1,250, and the raiyats 6 pies per rupee in their rent. There is an annual grant of Rs. 240 for the relief of cripples and the blind. An agricultural bank advances loans to raiyats at 12 per cent. per annum. The depositors are chiefly Calcutta friends of the poet, who get interest at 7 per cent. The bank has about Rs. 90,000 invested in loans."

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

ADMINIS-
TRATIVE
CHARGES
AND
STAFF.

THE district is divided into 3 subdivisions, the area and population of which are shown in the margin. The sanctioned staff under the District Magistrate at Rāmpur Boālia consists of three officers with first class powers, and two officers with third class powers. In addition to these officers, there are a Superintendent of Excise and a Special Partition Officer, the latter of whom is engaged in conducting the partition of two large estates. An Assistant Magistrate and a Sub-Deputy Collector are generally posted to Rāmpur Boālia, and there are two Kānungos for revenue work. The Sub-divisional Officer of Naogaon is assisted by a Sub-Deputy Collector, and the Sub-Divisional Officer of Nātor by a Deputy Magistrate (who is generally called the Second Officer) and by a Sub-Deputy Collector.

The Executive Engineer, Rājshāhi Division, has also his headquarters at Rāmpur Boālia. The district forms a subdivision of the Public Works Department, called the Boālia subdivision, which is in charge of a Sub-divisional Officer. He has four overseers under him, viz., two at Rāmpur Boālia, one at Nātor and one at Naogaon, each civil subdivision forming a section. A temporary subdivision under a separate Sub-Divisional Officer with an overseer and sub-overseer has also been created for the building works in progress at the Police Training College at Sardah : it will be abolished as soon as the works are completed.

PUBLIC
WORKS
DEPART-
MENT.ADMINIS-
TRATION
OF
JUSTICE.

There is a District and Sessions Judge for Rājshāhi, who is also District and Sessions Judge of Mālda, his headquarters being at Rāmpur Boālia. In addition to the Stipendiary Magistrates, there are Benches of Honorary Magistrates at Rāmpur Boālia (9), Naogaon (5), Nātor (6); the numbers

| Subdivision. | Area in square miles. | Population. |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Sadar ... | 891 | 561,221 |
| Naogaon ... | 860 | 617,405 |
| Nātor ... | 864 | 338,958 |
| Total ... | 2,618 | 1,480,567 |

indicate the number of Honorary Magistrates on the Bench at each place. The Subdivisional Officer of Nātor has special powers under section 14 of the Criminal Procedure Code to try cases under the Railway and Telegraph Acts occurring on the railway line from Sāra to Sāntahār, part of which lies in this district and part in the districts of Pābna and Bogra.

Civil justice is administered by the District Judge and by a Sub-Judge at Rāmpur Boālia and 3 Munsifs, of whom one holds his Court at Rāmpur Boālia, the second at Naogāon and the third at Nātor.

There are altogether 14 thanas (revenue units) in the district with 26 police-stations (investigating centres) as shown below. It is proposed to establish another police-station at Rāninagar in the Pānchupur thana.

| SADAR. | | NATOR. | | NAOGAON. | |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| Thana. | Police-station. | Thana. | Police-station. | Thana. | Police station. |
| Bāgmāra Boālia ... | Bāgmāra. Boālia. Nahāta. Paba. | Baraigrām Lālpur ... | Baraigrām. Gurudāspur. Lālpur. Wālia. | Mahādebpur Mānda ... | Mahādeb- pur. Mānda. |
| Chārghat Godāgāri Puthia ... | Chārghāt. Rājāpur. Godāgāri. Puthia. | Nātor ... | Nātor. Bāgātipāra. | Naogāon | Nāmatpur. Naogāon. Badal- gāchhi. |
| Tānor ... | Durgapur. Tānor. Mohampur Khurd. | Singra ... | Singra. Nandigrām. | Pānchupur | N a n d ā- nāli. Pā n c h u- pur. |

The strength of the district police in 1914 was 650, viz., the

| Subdivision. | Dafadars. | Chankidars. |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Sadar ... | 127 | 1,346 |
| Nātor ... | 109 | 1,075 |
| Naogāon ... | 98 | 972 |
| Total ... | 334 | 3,393 |

Superintendent, two Deputy Superintendents, 52 Sub-Inspectors, 71 head-constables and 517 constables. The village police force in the same year aggregated 3,727 as shown in the margin.

The armed reserve at Rāmpur

Boālia consists of one Inspector, one Sub-Inspector, 4 head-constables and 50 constables.

The Police Training College at Sardah is a large institution in which probationary Assistant Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, Sub-Inspectors and constables are trained in their duties. At present (January 1915) 12 Probationary Assistant Superintendents, one probationary Deputy Superintendent,

120 Probationary Sub-Inspectors and 400 constables are undergoing training there, making a total of 533 men, while the instructing staff alone amounts to 80 men. There is also a large Police Constables Training School at Rāmpur Boālia; at the end of 1914-15, there were 374 recruits under training, the staff consisting of the Principal, 2 Inspectors, 7 Sub-Inspectors, 30 head-constables and 2 constables. The total police force in the district amounts to approximately 1,650, including probationary officers and recruits in the Police Training College and the Constables Training School.

JAILS.

There is a large Central Jail at Rāmpur Boālia, which also serves as the District Jail. As a Central Jail it receives prisoners sentenced to imprisonment for more than two years from the jails in other districts, mostly from the districts of the Rājshāhi Division, while local convicts as well as under-trial prisoners from the Courts at Rāmpur Boālia are sent to it the same way as to a District Jail. It occupies a large area, viz., 84,000 square yards and has accommodation for 833 prisoners, viz., 779 convicts, 40 under-trial prisoners and 14 civil prisoners; the daily average number confined in 1914 was 819, of whom 22 were women. There is a separate ward for female prisoners, with accommodation for 41 persons, and a juvenile ward for 10 prisoners. A large garden outside the walls of the jail provides the inmates with vegetables.

The jail is laid out like other Indian jails on the barrack system, and there are only 20 cells, of which one is for prisoners condemned to death. The hospital has 4 wards with beds for 89 patients. The principal industries are blanket making, the weaving of cloth for chaukidars' uniforms and the manufacture of clothing for prisoners in this jail and other jails of Bengal. The minor industries are the pressing of mustard oil and castor oil, the manufacture of *daris*, cane and bamboo work, and wheat grinding. The yarn for blankets is mainly obtained from the Bangalore Woollen Mills. The output of the looms in 1914 was 19,438 blankets and 77,614 yards of cloth for chaukidars' uniforms. The most important of the minor industries is the pressing of castor oil; the medicinal oil manufactured here is supplied to nearly all the dispensaries in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and Assam. Another industry which has been recently started is the making of bread; the loaves are supplied to local residents.

European residents are also dependent on the jail for their supply of drinking water, which is sold to them at one auna per bucket or tin: the same water is used by the prisoners. It

is obtained from the river Padma, and is brought inside the jail by means of pipes. It is lifted to a settling tank by means of a force pump. In the settling tank the water is treated with ferric alum and allowed to stand for not less than 6 hours. It is then passed, through a filtering bed of sand, gravel and charcoal, to a boiler, where it is thoroughly boiled. From the boiler the water goes through pipes into the cooling tanks. After this it is stored in iron cisterns, and when cool is distributed to various parts of the jail. The water for cooking purposes is taken from the settling tank into six iron cisterns, where it is treated with alum and then taken to the kitchen cisterns. The reservoirs, settling tank, cooling tank, cisterns and water drums are thoroughly washed and scoured every week.

Owing to the silting up of the inner channel of the Padma during the dry season, it is often necessary to lay down nearly a mile of pipes from the jail. In order to avoid the difficulty and expense caused by such a long "lead," and to see if an independent and reliable water-supply can be obtained, tube boring experiments have been carried out, and the Public Works Department is now engaged in sinking a well inside the jail.

There are subsidiary jails at Naogāon and Nātor, the former of which has accommodation for 14 prisoners, and the latter for 15 prisoners. Only under-trial and short term prisoners are confined in them.

There are 6 registry offices in the district, as shown in the following statement which gives the salient statistics for 1914. The office at Godāgāri is a joint office with Rāmpur Boālia. Those at Atrai and Mahādebpur are joint with Naogāon. The office at Atrai is a new office which was opened in 1914.

REGISTRATION.

| OFFICE. | Number of documents registered. | Receipts. | Expenditure. |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| | | Rs. | Rs. |
| Atrai ... | 1474 | 1,505 | 1,148 |
| Godāgāri ... | 1623 | 1,600 | 882 |
| Mahādebpur ... | 3973 | 4,469 | 2,484 |
| Naogāon ... | 5700 | 6,422 | 2,173 |
| Nātor ... | 4784 | 6,784 | 2,595 |
| Rāmpur Boālia | 3254 | 7,056 | 5,157 |
| Total ... | 20,808 | 27,836 | 14,439 |

EXCISE.

According to the returns for 1914-15, the total excise revenue amounts to Rs. 3,09,000, the incidence being 3 annas 4 pies per head of the population. The principal sources of revenue are country spirit, which is responsible for 46 per cent. of the total amount, *gānja* (34 per cent.) and opium (9 per cent.).

The contract supply system is in force, and there are 31 licenses for retail vend of country spirits. There is a warehouse at Godāgāri, which obtains its liquor from the Marhaurah distillery in Sāran and issues it to 7 retail shops. The warehouse is in charge of an Excise Sub-Inspector, who is also *ex-officio* Sub-Registrar of Godāgāri. Of the other shops twenty-two get their supply from a warehouse at Sāntahār and two from a warehouse at Pābna. Two kinds of liquor are sold, viz., 30 U. P. and 60 U.P.; the retail price of the former is Re. 1-8 and of the latter 12 annas per quart bottle. There are 120 licenses for the sale of unfermented *tāri* and eleven for fermented *tāri*. *Tāri* is the fermented juice of the palmyra and date palm trees; the unfermented juice of the date palm is also used for the manufacture of *gur* or molasses. *Pachwai* is commonly drunk by the Orāons and Santāls, and 3,368 licenses are issued for home-brewing. The licenses are granted to the village headman on payment of Re. 1-8 for each family.

Gānja brings in a revenue of Rs. 1,05,000 from license fees and duty; there are 7 licenses for wholesale vend and 45 licenses for retail vend. In the year 1914-15 the wholesale price at Naogāon varied from Rs. 20 to Rs. 95 per maund. The retail vendors purchased the drug from the wholesale dealers or *golādārs* at Rs. 3-8 a seer, and the retail price at which they sold it to the public was Rs. 60 per seer in the towns and Rs. 30 to Rs. 60 in rural areas. These figures sufficiently show the enormous profits made by middlemen. Only flat *chur gānja* is consumed in Rājshāhi. The cultivation, manufacture, storage and issue of *gānja* are under Government supervision, and form a special branch of the administration, which will be described in the next chapter.

The license fees and duty on opium bring in Rs. 27,000; there are 8 druggists' permits and 23 licenses for retail sale. The retail prices are Rs. 50 to Rs. 70 per seer in the towns, and Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 in rural areas; the treasury price is Rs. 31 a seer. The consumption is small, averaging under one-sixth of a tola per head of the population.

The administration of the Excise Department is under the Superintendent of Excise, whose staff is as follows. In the

Sadar subdivision there are two Sub-Inspectors for the executive branch and one Sub-Inspector for the distillery branch; in the Nātor subdivision one Sub-Inspector; in the Naogāon subdivision one Sub-Inspector; in the Naogāon *Gānja Mahāl* the Supervisor, one Inspector, three Assistant Supervisors (whose grade is that of Sub-Inspectors) and one Sub-Inspector in charge of the *golas* or warehouses.

The demand of income-tax in 1902-03 (the last year before the minimum taxable income was raised to Rs. 1,000) was Rs. 56,646. After that year the demand fell as low as Rs. 41,506 (in 1905-06), but it has since increased gradually. It still, however, falls short of the old demand, being Rs. 52,367 in 1914-15, whereas in some districts the demand has grown so much that it has passed the old figures. The total number of assesseses is only 954.

INCOME-
TAX.



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER XII.

THE GANJA MAHĀL.*

GENERAL.

THE name Gānja Mahāl is given to an area in the Naogāon subdivision in which the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa* or *indica*) is cultivated. The plant yields three narcotic products called *gānja*, *charas* and *bhāng*: the seed, it may be mentioned, is the familiar hemp seed which is given to cage, birds. *Gānja* consists of the dried flowering tops of the cultivated female hemp plants which have become coated with resin in consequence of being unimpregnated and so having been unable to set seeds freely. *Charas* is the name applied to the resinous matter, which forms the active principle when collected separately. *Bhāng* is the name given to the dried leaves of the plant, whether male or female, cultivated or uncultivated. The sexes of the plants are distinguishable in the wild state, the loose flowering panicle of the male being different from the comparatively stiff and apparently blossomless spike of the female. Strangely enough, however, the cultivators themselves misname the sexes and talk of the *gānja*-bearing plant as the male and the pollen-bearing plant as the female.

The cultivation is carried out under Government supervision in a tract of 76 square miles in the Naogāon, Badalgāchhi and Mahādebpur thanas. There are 322 villages in the tract, and the area suitable for *gānja* cultivation is 9,094 acres. The Mahāl supplies not merely the needs of the whole of Bengal and Assam, but also those of Bihar and Orissa and of a part of the United Provinces; some is also exported to the Feudatory States of Orissa and Cooch Behar, and a small quantity is shipped to London, whence it is passed on to the West Indies. The area cultivated varies from year to year, the average for the last seven years being 970 acres with a normal outturn of 8,000 maunds. The maximum area which may be cultivated in any year is at present fixed by the Government of

* This Chapter has been compiled chiefly from a Report on the Cultivation of Ganja by Hem Chandra Kar (1877) and the Report of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission (1894).

India at 1,026 acres, but this limit is subject to periodical revision. It may be added that hemp is an exhausting crop requiring a light well drained soil, and that it cannot be grown on the same land for more than one or two years running and that there is only a limited quantity of thoroughly suitable ground in the Mahāl.

The plant is first reared in a seed bed or nursery consisting of a plot of high light sandy loam, generally near the cultivator's homestead. The selection of this plot is made in May, and as soon as one or two showers have fallen, it is ploughed. The ploughing is repeated three or four times each month till August. The object is complete pulverisation of the soil, and, if necessary, the bamboo ladder, in addition to the plough, is passed over the land for this purpose. Manure is not used, and the land must be quite free of shade of any kind. The seeds are sown broadcast on a fine day after ploughing, and the sowing is followed by harrowing to cover the seed. The bed is carefully drained. Seeds are not sown on either a rainy or even a cloudy day when rain is expected, as the wet ground rots them. If it rains three or four days after the seeds have been sown, most of the seeds are destroyed, as the earth gets hardened into a cake after the rain, and the germs cannot force their way through it. In such a case fresh seed has to be sown in another nursery. The nursery is not irrigated nor is the grass weeded out at any time after sowing, as the cultivators are of opinion that the growth of grass in the seed beds is beneficial to the young plants, as it protects them from the wind. The cultivator does not grow a crop specially for seed, but uses the grains that fall from his *ganja* in the process of manufacture; these are very numerous in spite of the pains taken to eliminate male plants.

CULTIVA-
TION.
The nur-
sery.

The plant is transplanted in September into a field which has been prepared for it. The field is selected between January and the middle of March, and must be one which has lain fallow, or has borne nothing but light crops, such as pulses or mustard, during the two previous years. It must not be overshadowed by trees. It is first ploughed to remove weeds and stubble as thoroughly as the cultivators' means will allow. In April and May the field is liberally dressed with fresh surface earth from surrounding lands, the quantity used depending on the quality of the field. The turf and weeds on the sides of the field are next dug up in clods and thrown on to the field, the holes thus made being filled up with earth from the ditches. The field is thus cleaned to its extreme boundaries

The fields.

and the weeds utilised as dressing for the land. In this process a small bank about nine inches high is raised round the field. The fresh earth added to the field becomes desiccated in a week or so, and then cowdung manure is added, and the field well ploughed again. From this time till September ploughing, followed by harrowing with the bamboo ladder, is carried out from time to time, the belief being that the oftener the land is ploughed the better is the crop. A channel is made to keep the field well drained. Towards the end of August or beginning of September the field is again dressed with cowdung, refuse and house-sweepings.

Transplan-
tation.

About a week or ten days after this comes the day for planting out, which must be a sunny day. The field is ploughed and harrowed, and made into ridges, a foot high and a foot apart at the base, well smoothed and beaten down with the hand, and the seedlings are planted out 6 to 8 inches apart. All this is done on the one day for fear that the soil which has been so thoroughly pulverised should get too dry. The seedlings at the time of transplantation are from four to five weeks old and from six to twelve inches high. If rain falls within three or four days after transplantation, it is most injurious to the young the plants, the roots of which, not having taken any hold upon soil, rot and die : a second transplantation is then necessary.

Subse-
quent
treatment.

A month or so after transplantation, about the middle of October, the fields are carefully weeded. A fortnight later (beginning of November) the ridges are hoed down as far as is possible without injuring the roots of the hemp, which are then well manured with oil-cake or a mixture of cake and cowdung, and the ridges rebuilt over the manure. The ridges are beaten down with a flat split bamboo to make them firm. About the middle of November the plants are trimmed by the removal of the lower branches. This helps to give the plant the pyramidal shape that ensures the flowering tops being as close together as possible. It also obviates the formation of *gānja* close to the ground, where it would certainly get covered with sand and mud, and further it admits of another course of ploughing and harrowing with a small plough and a narrow ladder between the ridges. This course immediately follows the trimming, and is itself followed by a second course of manuring with powdered cowdung and oil-cake, after which the ridges are again rebuilt and firmly beaten down as before.

Elimina-
tion of the
male
plants.

At about this stage the detection and removal of the male plants is begun. An expert is required for the work, either a professional called a *poddār* (or *parakhḍār*) or the cultivator

himself, if he has acquired the necessary skill in distinguishing the male from the female plants. The exact differences by which the plants are distinguished by the experts cannot be described with confidence. The operation takes place before the flowers are developed; and Pabu Hem Chandra Kar says that the inspection is invariably made in the morning so as to have a good light, which shows how fine these differences must be. The *poddār* breaks over the plants which he decides to be male, the cultivator plucks them out, and fills the blank spaces with plants from the parts of the field where they are left in greater number. The plants are then trimmed for the second time. Then follows the first irrigation, which is regulated so as to moisten the ridges, but leave no water standing in the furrows.

The *poddār's* visit may be repeated two or three times, and the field may be irrigated from two to four times in the following few weeks. The cultivator himself is always on the look out to detect and remove male plants which may have been overlooked at the regular inspections. Between the first and second irrigations the ridges are hoed and the field manured a third time, and the plants are trimmed for the third time.

The male plants begin to flower in November and the female plants in the latter part of December, and from the time the latter flowering begins the cultivator is on the outlook for those abnormal male flowers on his female plants which the *poddār* could not possibly have foretold. The *gānja* begins to ripen about the last week of January, the state of maturity being indicated by a brownish appearance and the falling off of all the larger leaves.

The next process is manufacture, for which bright sunny weather is necessary. The crop does not all come to maturity at the same time, and the plants must be manipulated within three or four days of maturity, or they become useless. The plants are cut in batches, as many as can be handled by the available labour in three days. In other words, the whole of the *gānja* is not cut at one time, and the cultivator cuts the plants as they ripen, subject to the limit that he will not cut at one time more than he can conveniently manufacture with the labour at his disposal. The green plants are then carried to the *chātar* or manufacturing yard.

MANUFACTURE.

The *chātars* are simply rectangular enclosures set up in the paddy fields at convenient centres in each of the three circles into which the Gānja Mahāl is divided. There are 20 at

The *Chātars*.

present as shown below :—

| Murādpur Circle. | Kirtipur Circle. | Gobīndpur Circle. |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Boālia ... | Borsail ... | Chak Muktār. |
| Baktarpur ... | Chak Sankur ... | Gobīndpur. |
| Ekartāra ... | Kirtipur ... | Hāpānia. |
| Murādpur ... | Kumārgāri ... | Moglāmpur. |
| Nārāyānpur ... | Madhainagar ... | Salukia. |
| Shāhpur ... | Marnna ... | Srībādīgatti. |
| Shāhzādpur ... | Pahārpur ... | |

They are situated within 1½ to 10 miles from Naogāon and vary in size from 3 acres to 15 acres. The number of cultivators assigned to each, *i.e.*, of cultivators who bring their *gānja* to the *chātar* for manufacture, ranges from 47 to 291. In the manufacturing season the *chātar* presents a busy scene, the number of cultivators and labourers present rising in the largest *chātars* to 1,500, and even in the smallest not being under 200. The interior consist simply of flat fields from which the crop has been reaped. The fences round them are erected by the cultivators themselves. They are about 6 feet high and are constructed of the most motley materials imaginable—corrugated iron sheets, rush matting, flattened-out bamboos, jute-stalks—in fact, anything that will make some sort of a screen which can be fastened to stakes. Each cultivator attends to his own particular portion of the fence, for which he brings the materials he can best afford or finds ready to hand. Within the enclosure abutting against the fence, in fact using it as a back wall, each cultivator constructs a shed of some sort, built according to his means, in which he sleeps at night alongside of or upon his stock of *gānja* to guard it against pilfering.

The process of manufacture is of a simple, almost rudimentary character, the result being two kinds of *gānja* called flat *chur* (generally misspelt *choor*) and round *chur*.

Flat *gānja*.

The manufacture of flat *gānja* takes three days. The first day the plants are cut in the morning, brought to the manufacturing ground, and spread out in the sun till the afternoon. They are then cut up one by one into lengths of about one or two feet. Those having flower-spikes upon them are retained and the rest are thrown away. The portions selected are spread out in the dew for the night.

The work of the second day begins at noon. It consists in alternately pressing and drying the crop and getting rid of

useless leaf and seed. The branches are piled over a mat in bundles of five or ten, flower-spikes inwards and overlapping, in a circular heap about four feet in diameter. The workmen tread this down, moving round upon it and supporting one another. Bundles are added from time to time till the heap is about two feet high. A mat is then placed over the heap, and the men sit or place weights upon it. After half an hour of the pressure the pile is unstacked, and the bundles are taken off and beaten together over a mat to shake out seeds and leaf. The heap is again built exactly as before, the upper layers of the previous heap being put at the bottom of this, and the processes of treading, pressing, unstacking and beating are repeated. The bundles are laid out side by side on mats and trodden individually, the workman holding the stem ends with one foot while he presses the other foot downwards over the flower. The bundles, after being once pressed and trampled upon for 6 or 7 minutes, are turned upside down and the process of trampling is repeated. The bundles are turned and beaten against the mat during this process. When it is complete, the bundles are laid in a slanting position over a pole on the ground, and covered with mats for the night.

The third day's work begins in the early morning. The twigs are separated, and again piled in bundles in the same circular form as before, trodden for a short while, and covered up. Work is resumed at 10 A.M. The heap is unstacked and the bundles are carefully handled to remove leaf. They are then laid out in rows and trodden. During this process they are turned over, and at intervals the sun is allowed to play upon them. They are then handled again and gently beaten, and spread out more completely than before. Those that have retained an undue quantity of leaf are stood up in the sun. The last process is to press the twigs individually with the feet in the way already described.

The manufacture is now almost complete. The flower spikes have been pressed into flat masses, and the leaf and seeds have been as far as possible removed.

It now remains only to separate the *chur*, i.e., the flower heads from the twigs. This is generally done after a cultivator has manufactured a sufficient quantity of flat *gānja* twigs by the above processes. The twigs are first dried in the sun so that the flower heads may be easily broken off, and then the dried leaves, which still remain on the flower heads, are removed by rubbing either with the hand or with a small flattened branch of a date-palm tree. The flower heads are then broken off from

the twigs, and after a sufficient quantity has been thus separated, the refuse, etc., which accrues in this process is removed by passing it through a kind of bamboo sieve or, if there is wind, by winnowing. The projecting woody portions are broken and then the *chur* is packed in gunny bags.

Round
gānja.

For the manufacture of round *gānja* the plants are gathered either very early in the morning or somewhat later in the day. In the latter case they are laid out under the open sky for the night, and the sorting is done the next morning. The twigs are laid out in the sun till noon when rolling is begun. A horizontal bar is lashed on to uprights about four feet from the ground and mats are placed on the ground on each side of it. Bundles of twigs are set out on the mats. The men range themselves on each side of the bar, and, holding on to it for support, proceed to roll the bundles with their feet. One foot is used to hold the bundle and the other to roll it, working down from the stem to the flower heads. This process goes on for about 10 minutes, and during it the bundles are taken up and shaken from time to time to get rid of leaf. The bundles are then broken up and the twigs exposed to the sun for about a quarter of an hour. A second but shorter course of rolling by foot follows, and then the twigs are hand-pressed, four or five together. After this the twigs are opened up and exposed to the sun again. This hand-pressing is repeated after half an hour, and the plants are exposed to the sun in single twigs. A little after 4 P.M. the twigs are made into bundles of about one hundred, and placed on mats and covered up for the night.

The next morning the bundles are untied and the twigs again exposed to the sun. If they are sufficiently dry by midday, they only require a little handling and rolling to complete the manufacture. If they are not dry enough, the first course of rolling and pressing by hand has to be repeated after which the useless leaves fall off with a little manipulation. The twigs are then made into bundles, which are placed in rows under a mat kept down by a bamboo, and left for the night. The manufacture is completed the next day by exposing the bundles to the sun, heads upwards, till the afternoon. After the cultivator has manufactured a sufficient quantity of round *gānja* twigs by the above processes he separates the *chur* from the twigs as in the case of flat *gānja*.

The drying process removes the watery juices of the plants, and thus not only reduces its weight as an excisable article, but

removes to considerable extent the risk of mould. It causes the comparatively inert small leaves to shrivel, and so makes their removal more easy. The kneading process removes, more or less completely, the comparatively inert leaves, still further reducing the weight. The article produced being for its bulk more active in proportion to the absence of leaves, it follows that the more thoroughly they are removed, the better sale does it command. Kneading presses together the resinous parts on which the active principle is most plentifully deposited. These, being rendered somewhat sticky by the presence of the resin, become more or less agglutinated and are thus less liable to fall off in transit, and so reduce the active power of the *gānja*.

The sticks can be used as fuel, but the cultivators are not allowed to remove them to their houses, and they are burnt within the *chāltar* yard. The leaf is winnowed from the seed and burnt. The seeds are kept for the next year's culture. They are not narcotic, and are sometimes eaten, besides being used for the expression of oil and other purposes.

Disposal
of sticks,
leaf and
seeds.

The Collector of Rājshāhi is *ex-officio* Superintendent of the Gānja Mahāl and exercises a general supervision over its administration. The cultivation, manufacture, storage and issue of *gānja* are carried on under the control of the Subdivisional Officer of Naogāon, who is Deputy Superintendent of the Gānja Mahāl. He is assisted by a Supervisor, who is in direct charge and has three Excise Sub-Inspectors under him as well as an Inspector of Excise. The Mahāl is divided into three circles, each under a Sub-Inspector, viz., Murādpur, Kirttipur and Gobindpur.

ADMINIS-
TRATION.

The area to be brought under *gānja* cultivation each year is fixed by the Collector with the sanction of the Commissioner of Excise; under the orders of Government, it may not exceed 1,026 acres. Only licensed cultivators may grow the plant: the licenses, which are granted free of charge, last for one working season and are issued by 30th of June. In the license the area and the plots which each man may cultivate are set forth, and no excess is allowed. There are nearly 3,000 cultivators, scattered over 200 villages, and the average cultivated by each is about 1 *bigha*. Throughout the period of cultivation, the Supervisor and his subordinate officers go round the Gānja Mahāl inspecting the fields, comparing the areas under the crop with those stated in the licenses and seeing that there is no excess cultivation. Each cultivator has to give notice to the Supervisor or his assistants three days before he intends to

cut his crop, and permission to do so is entered on his license. The Deputy Superintendent fixes the *chātars* or manufacturing yards at which manufacture is to take place, and the Supervisor issues orders as to the different *chātars* to which the cultivators are to take the plant when cut. The *chātars* are fenced in to prevent theft and smuggling; each cultivator has a shed against the fence in the place allotted to him by the Supervisor or his assistant, and the central space is left open.

Each *chātar* is in charge of an Excise Sub-Inspector while manufacture is in process; the Sub-Inspector's duty is to see that the plants are not smuggled out of the *chātars*, that all the plants are manufactured into *gānja*, and that the dust and refuse are collected daily and burnt. When manufactured the *gānja* is packed in sealed bags which, after being weighed by the officer in charge, have the weight, the owner's name, the kind of *gānja*, etc., marked on them. They are then taken off to the warehouses at Naogāon when the amount manufactured is sufficient to admit of economical transport. No cultivator may accumulate more than a maund of manufactured *gānja* at the *chātar*: directly a maund (or the whole amount, if less than a maund has been made) is ready, it has to be despatched to Naogāon.

On arrival at Naogāon the bags are again weighed and are then stored in racks in the warehouse, each man's stock being kept separate as far as possible. The warehouse is kept open daily, except on Sundays and holidays, in order to allow of the *gānja* being inspected by intending purchasers. It is bought by wholesale dealers, who first have to obtain a license from the Collectors of their districts stating the quantity they may export. The dealer either comes to Naogāon himself or sends an authorized agent, or, as is more generally done, purchases through a broker, who negotiates with the cultivator direct. The brokers, who now number 15, have to obtain a license from the Subdivisional Officer authorising them to act as such; they are entitled to realize brokerage from the purchasers at the rate of Rs. 2 per maund on the quantity of *gānja* purchased, and are strictly forbidden to get anything from the cultivators. The sale having been effected, the purchaser receives from the vendor a delivery order: on this an entry of the payment is made and is attested by the owner of the *gānja* in the presence of the Supervisor. This precaution is taken to prevent fraud, *e.g.*, the brokers might otherwise pay less than the amount entered on the delivery order and rob the wholesale dealers of the difference. The

Supervisor verifies the stock every month by counting the bags and half-yearly (at the end of June and December) by actual weighment.

The *gānja* bought by the dealer is sent under a pass to his *gola* at the head-quarters or subdivision of the district of import, where it is placed under double lock. The wholesale dealer sells to the retail vendor at his own price, and the retail vendor also sells to the public at his own price. The profits made on the sale are literally enormous. The drug is taxed at the high rate of Rs. 20 per seer and before it reaches the consumer passes through the hands of the wholesale dealer and the retail vendor, both of whom make a profit out of it. The price obtained by the cultivators varies from Rs. 40 per maund to Rs. 300 a maund, the last being paid for an exceptional quality of *gānja*. The retail price varies from 10 annas to 12 annas a tola. Taking 12 annas as a mean, the selling price is Rs. 60 per seer or Rs. 2,400 per maund, so that even if the cultivator is paid Rs. 300 a maund, there is a difference of Rs. 2,100 a maund between the taxed and untaxed articles. So high indeed is the retail price, that it makes the drug worth $\frac{1}{3}$ ths of its weight in silver. As regards the State revenue, the average amount manufactured yearly yields a duty of nearly 66 lakhs or a little under £450,000.

The following interesting account of the cultivators is quoted from a report written in 1904 by Mr. G. Rainy, I.C.S. :—

“As a class the cultivators of the Gānja Mahāl are remarkable in two ways. They are singularly peaceable and law-abiding, and they are remarkably wealthy and prosperous. The impression they created on my mind was a most favourable one. I found them uniformly pleasant to deal with, frank without bumptiousness, and courteous without servility. They are without doubt the richest and most prosperous body of peasantry in Bengal, and their wealth and prosperity is the direct gift of Government, which has made them its partners in an enormously valuable monopoly. One or two instances will be sufficient to show how wealthy they are. When the Excise Commissioner visited Naogāon in 1903, a proposal was on foot to export a large quantity of *gānja* to Madras, where the supply was short. The proposal eventually came to nothing, but when it was entertained it was found that it would be necessary to raise Rs. 60,000 at short notice to finance the export. One of the cultivators, Jarif Mandal, was summoned to Naogāon and asked whether the money could be raised. His answer was that although he had not the money himself, he was

CULTIVATORS.

prepared to get it from his mother and produce it the same day. This man is probably the richest of all the cultivators, but not by a very great deal; there are others who are not much his inferiors. The *gānja* cultivators contributed amongst them Rs. 5,000 for the creation of the Higher English School at Naogāon. If a road or a bridge is wanted, instead of waiting for the tardy action of a District Board, or committing themselves to the tender mercies of the Public Works Department, the cultivators raise a subscription among themselves and the road or bridge is constructed. Instances might be multiplied, but these will suffice to show how well off they are."



नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

CHAPTER XIII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

THE District Board consists of 23 members, of whom five are *ex-officio* members, eleven are elected and seven are appointed by Government. The District Magistrate is *ex-officio* Chairman of the Board. The income of the Board has been steadily rising, increasing from Rs. 1,26,000 to Rs. 2,33,000 in 1910-11. Since then its income has been still further increased owing to the Government making over to it the Public Works Cess, and in 1914-15 the receipts were Rs. 3,34,000. A fair amount is derived from pounds, which number 136 :

DISTRICT
BOARD.

| Sadar. | Nator. | Naogāon. |
|-------------|----------|-------------|
| Bargāchhi. | Bagsar. | Naogāon- |
| Asariadaha. | Sherkol. | Sultānpur. |
| Chārgāhāt. | Singra. | Sibganj- |
| Gābtali. | | Sibganjpur. |
| Haridebpur. | | |
| Isabpur. | | |
| Kharchuka. | | |
| Mirganj. | | |
| Nahāta. | | |
| Prentali. | | |
| Sultānganj. | | |

they brought in an income of Rs. 18,000 in the same year. There are sixteen ferries, as shown in the margin, the farming of which realizes Rs. 12,000 a year. Both ferries and pounds are leased out, generally for a year at a time, and there is a Pound

and Ferry Inspector who supervises their management. All the pounds are under the control of the Local Boards. The management of the ferries is also in their hands except in the Sadar subdivision, where they are managed by the District Board.

The Board maintains 3 Middle Vernacular schools (at Bāsudebpur, Dharāil, and Gāngor), 3 Upper Primary schools (Brahmapur, Chakgauri, and Isabpur), and 197 Lower Primary schools. It also gives grants-in-aid to 20 Middle schools, 64 Upper Primary schools, 436 Lower Primary schools, and 12 other schools, such as *tols*, *madrasas* and *maktabs*. In addition to these, it maintains the Diamond Jubilee Industrial School at Rāmpur Boālia. It also allots building grants for primary schools from a special Government grant, with the help of which 32 Upper Primary and 205 Lower Primary schools have

been provided with buildings. It maintains 8 dispensaries, and also gives scholarships tenable at the Campbell Medical School in Calcutta and at the Dacca Medical School. Large sums are allotted annually to water-supply and are expended in excavating wells and tanks. In some cases the District Board bears the whole cost, and in others the Local Boards pay two-thirds of the cost, on condition that the people themselves pay one-third. For the supervision of sanitation a Sanitary Inspector is entertained. Veterinary relief is provided by three Veterinary Assistants; a veterinary dispensary is shortly to be established at Rāmpur Boālia. The mileage of the roads maintained by the District Board is—metalled roads 45 miles, and unmetalled roads 505 miles. In addition to these, there are 352 village roads, with an aggregate mileage of 928 miles, under the management of the Local Boards.

The District Engineer has a staff consisting of a Supervisor and three Overseers (one for each subdivision). There are also three Local Board Overseers, the supervision of whose work is the special charge of an officer designated the Local Board Supervisor.

LOCAL
BOARDS.

The Local Boards which have been constituted for each subdivision are responsible for the management of village roads and of the District Board roads made over to them for maintenance, for the management of pounds and ferries (except the ferries in the Sadar subdivision), and for the control of primary education and water-supply in rural areas. The following statement shows the constitution of each Local Board :—

| Local Board. | Ex-officio. | Nomi- nated. | Elected. | Total. |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|----------|--------|
| Boālia ... | ... | 5 | 10 | 15 |
| Nātor ... | 1 | 4 | 8 | 13 |
| Naogāon ... | 3 | 2 | 8 | 13 |

No union committees have been constituted.

MUNICI-
PALITIES.

There are only two municipalities in the district, viz. Rāmpur Boālia and Nātor, but it is in contemplation to move Government to sanction the constitution of a third municipality at Naogāon.

Rāmpur
Boālia.

Rāmpur Boālia was made a municipality in 1876 and is administered by 21 Commissioners, of whom fourteen are elected, five are nominated and two hold their seats *ex-officio*.

The Chairman is elected. The number of rate-payers is 4,581 or 20 per cent. of the population. The municipality is divided into seven wards. The municipal income is raised by means of a rate on holdings at 6½ per cent. on their annual value. A latrine fee is also assessed on the annual value of holdings, according to a sanctioned scale, in those parts of the town to which Part IX of the Bengal Municipal Act has been extended. The average incidents of taxation in 1914-15 was Re. 1-8 per head of the population, and the total receipts (excluding the opening balance) amounted to Rs. 51,204.

The Nātor municipality was established in 1869, and there Nātor. are 1,952 rate-payers or 24 per cent. of the population. There are 18 Commissioners, of whom twelve (*i.e.*, two-thirds of the total number) are elected, and six are nominated. The Chairman is elected. The town is divided into 12 wards. Up till 1915 the income was raised by means of a personal tax, *i.e.*, a tax according to circumstances and property at 12 annas per Rs. 100 of income. The assessment has recently been revised, and a rate on the valuation of holdings has been introduced in 7 wards in place of the tax on persons. There is also a latrine tax levied at the rate of 8 per cent. on the annual value of holdings. The incidence of taxation in 1914-15 was Re. 1-10-5 per head of the population, and the income (excluding the opening balance) was Rs. 31,000.



CHAPTER XIV.

EDUCATION.

LITERACY. A FAIR indication of the extent to which education is diffused is afforded by the census statistics of literacy. The test of literacy is ability both to read and write, with this further qualification that a person is only recorded as literate if he can write a letter to a friend and read the answer to it; all persons who are unable to do this are entered in the census schedules as illiterate. The total number of persons in the district who came up to the prescribed standard of literacy in 1911 was 69,000, representing 5 per cent. of the population. This proportion is much below the average for Bengal, viz., 8 per cent., and only one other district (Rangpur) in the Province has a worse record. The district must therefore be regarded as exceptionally backward from an educational point of view; but there has been a slight advance since 1901, the proportion of literate males having risen from 6 to 8 per cent. The improvement, though slight, is perhaps greater than would appear from the figures, for the criterion of literacy was stricter than in 1901, when no conditions as to ability to read and write a letter were laid down. The education of women is still very backward, as may be realised from the fact that the literate males outnumber the literate females by approximately 18 to 1, the actual figures being 65,013 and 3,679, respectively.

There is not much difference between the figures for Hindus and those for Musalmāns. Of the former 31,795, and of the latter 36,676 were recorded as able to read and write, so that the actual number of literates is nearly the same in both communities; but the Muhammadans in the district outnumber Hindus by approximately 4 to 1, and whereas 17 per cent. of the Hindus are literate, only 6 per cent. of the Musalmāns come under this category. The inferiority of the Musalmāns in respect of female education is also very apparent, for there are only 533 Musalmān women who are able to read and write, whereas 3,098 Hindu women, or 6 times as many, can do so. As regards literacy in English, 6,099 persons, viz., 6,002 males and 97 females, have acquired a knowledge of that language, and four-fifths of them are Hindus.

The staff for the supervision of the schools in the district consist of a District Deputy Inspector, an Additional Deputy Inspector, who is in charge of the Naogāon subdivision, and 6 Sub-Inspectors of Schools. Each of the Sub-Inspectors has a circle under him, and the average number of schools supervised by each is 142 scattered over 432 square miles. The Sadar subdivision is divided into two circles, the Nātor subdivision forms one circle and there are three circles in the Naogāon subdivision. There is also an Inspecting Pandit employed by the Rāmpur Boālia Municipality. One of the Assistant Inspectors of Schools for the Rājshāhi Division has got his head-quarters at Rāmpur Boālia.

EDUCATIONAL STAFF.

The marginal table shows the number of educational institutions in Rājshāhi in 1915 and the number of students or scholars attending them.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

| Institution. | Number. | Number of students. |
|----------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Arts College ... | 1 | 730 |
| High schools ... | 9 | 2,811 |
| Middle English school. | 36 | 4,115 |
| Middle Vernacular schools. | 7 | 373 |
| Upper Primary schools. | 78 | 3,633 |
| Lower Primary schools. | 754 | 24,603 |
| Other schools ... | 50 | 1,196 |
| Total ... | 935 | 37,664 |

Of the schools, 911 with 36,226 pupils are public institutions, and there are only 23 private institutions with 508 pupils. Altogether, there is one school for every 2·7 miles and for every seven villages. The number of Muhammadan pupils under instruction is 68 per cent. of the total number, and of Hindu pupils 31·7 per cent.

The boys aggregate 32,302 and girls 4,432, representing respectively 28·5 per cent. of the male and 4·7 per cent. of the female population of school-going age. The school-going age, it may be explained, is 5 to 15 years, and the number of children of this age is assumed, in the returns of the Education Department, to be equivalent to 15 per cent. of the population, but the census shows that the actual proportion of children aged 5 to 15 in Bengal is 27 per cent. for males and 25½ per cent. for females. The actual percentage of children under instruction to the total number of school-going age is therefore much less than that shown in the departmental returns.

The premier educational institution in the district is the Rājshāhi College at Rāmpur Boālia. It is maintained by Government and is the third largest Government College in Bengal, the number of students being exceeded only in the Presidency and Dacca Colleges. It draws its students from a wide circle,

Rājshāhi College.

no less than 22 districts being represented. One-fourth are students of Rājshāhi; one-sixth come from Pābna, while Dacca, Farīdpur and Mymensingh contribute another one-fourth. The Governing Body consists of the District Magistrate the Principal, the senior Professor of the College and Raja Pramada Nāth Ray of Dighāpatia, whose family has done much for the College. The origin of the College may be traced back to 1828, when the people of Rājshāhi started an English school in order to provide their sons with English education. Being dependent on private subscriptions, the school languished for want of funds. It fell so deeply into debt that the buildings were about to be sold, when the Government stepped in and took it over in 1836. It was converted into a zila school and maintained as such till 1873, when it was raised to the status of a second grade College; this was due to the generosity of Raja Hara Nāth Ray Bahadur of Dubalhāti, who made over to Government an estate yielding an income of Rs. 5,000 a year. In 1878 it was made a first grade College, the additional expenditure being mainly met from the proceeds of an endowment of one and-a-half lakhs, which Raja Pramatha Nāth Ray Bahadur of Dighāpatia gave through the Rājshāhi Association. Instruction was given up to the standard of the M.A. Examination of the Calcutta University until 1908, when affiliation for the M.A. standard was withdrawn under the new regulations of the University. It now teaches up to the B.A. and B.Sc. standards of the University.

On the 31st March 1915 the total number of students in the College was 730, of whom 587 were Hindus and 143 were Muhammadans. The accommodation provided by the College for the students is limited, and there are only 160 in two hostels attached to the College. These are the Pramatha Nāth and Hemanta Kumāri Hostels for Hindus, which were opened in 1884 and 1901, respectively. The former was built with private subscriptions, the major portion of which was contributed by Raja Pramatha Nāth Ray of Dighāpatia. The latter is named after the donor, Rani Hemanta Kumāri Devi of Puthia. Altogether 245 students live in messes attached to the College, 142 live with their parents or relatives and 183 live with local guardians. There is a large staff under the Principal, consisting of 12 Professors and 8 Lecturers, besides Demonstrators of Physics and Chemistry.

There are three attached institutions, viz., the Madrasa, the Sanskrit College and the Collegiate School, which bring up the

aggregate of students and pupils to nearly 1,300. The Madrasa is a junior Madrasa with 70 pupils, who are taught by four Maulvis and one English teacher. It is located in a building erected in 1883 and has a hostel (called the Fuller Hostel after Sir Bamfylde Fuller, late Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam), which was opened in 1909; boys from both the Madrasa and Collegiate School live in it. The Sanskrit College, which is also managed by Government, is called the Rani Hemanta Kumāri Sanskrit College after the lady who founded and endowed it in 1904. Students in the College are instructed by four Professors in Nyaya, Vedānta, Smṛiti, Kavya and Grammar. The Collegiate School, which is in the College compound, has 453 pupils on the rolls and 21 teachers; the building was constructed almost entirely at the cost of Raja Jogendra Nāth Ray of Puthia and his wife. There is a Hindu hostel attached to it, which is located at some distance to the west near the Post Office. The staff consists of 21 teachers.

The following is a list of the High schools in the district and the number of pupils on the rolls on 31st March 1915—

Secondary
Schools.

| Place. | Name. | Number of pupils. |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Maintained by Government.</i> | | |
| Rāmpur Boālia ... | Rājshāhi Collegiate School ... | 453 |
| <i>Aided by Government.</i> | | |
| Naogaon ... | Krishnadhan High School ... | 404 |
| <i>Unaided.</i> | | |
| Chaugrām ... | Chaugrām High School ... | 163 |
| Dighapatia ... | Pramatha Nāth High School ... | 302 |
| Dubalhati ... | Haranāth High School ... | 211 |
| Nātor ... | Maharaja's High School ... | 316 |
| Patisar ... | Maharshi's Institution ... | 214 |
| Puthia ... | Parash Narayan High School ... | 302 |
| Rāmpur Boālia ... | Bholānāth Academy ... | 537 |

The Chaugrām school is unrecognised, and the Patisar school is only provisionally recognised.

Of the 36 Middle English schools, sixteen are aided by the District Board and one (at Arāni) by Government : of the

remaining nineteen unaided schools, twelve are unrecognised. All the three Middle Vernacular schools are maintained by the District Board.

Primary
Schools.

There are 672 primary schools for boys with 24,940 pupils. The total number of boys in the primary stage of education is 28,420, *i.e.*, including boys in the primary departments of secondary schools and boys reading in girls' schools, but excluding girls in boys' schools. The average number of pupils is 45 for Upper Primary and 33 for Lower Primary schools. Every block of 3·8 square miles and 9·4 villages has a boys' primary school.

Industrial
Schools.

Industrial and technical education are given in the Diamond Jubilee Industrial Institution at Rāmpur Boālia, the Sericultural School at the same place and the B class of the Rājshāhi Collegiate School.

The Diamond Jubilee Industrial Institution, which was established in 1898, is managed by the District Board. There are 40 pupils, and training is given in three different classes, viz., the sub-overseer class, the survey class and the artisan class, the course in each of which extends over two years. The Sericultural School is a Government institution with 12 students; instruction is given in methods of rearing silk worms and the microscopic examination of silk-worm pests. In the B class of the Rājshāhi Collegiate School candidates are prepared for the sub-overseer class of the Civil Engineering College at Sibpur.

Other
Schools.

There are three training schools situated at Rāmpur Boālia, Nātor and Bāndāikhāra, at which *gurus*, or teachers in primary schools, undergo a course of training. There are 12 recognised *madrasas* with 500 pupils, 29 recognised *maktabs* with 844 pupils, and 18 private schools for Muhammadans.

FEMALE
EDUCATION.

The total number of girls under instruction in schools was 4,432 in 1914-15. All the schools attended by them are primary schools, viz., three Upper Primary schools which are aided by Government, and 157 Lower Primary schools; two of the latter (at Belgharia and Kujāil) are Model Primary schools which are managed by Government.

EDUCATION OF
MUHAMMADANS.

There are altogether 24,979 Muhammadan boys and girls at school, or 68 per cent. of the total number of pupils of all creeds. The percentage of school-going age (reckoned according to the system adopted by the Education Department) is 25 in the case of boys and 3½ per cent. in the case of girls, whereas the corresponding figures for Hindus are 41 per cent. and 6½ per cent., respectively. This in itself shows sufficiently

clearly how backward the Muhammadans are, compared with the Hindus, in availing themselves of educational facilities. The great majority, moreover, only study in primary schools, and though the Muhammadan population is four times as large as the Hindu population, Hindu boys and girls are in a majority in Upper Primary, Middle and High schools. In fact, the Muhammadans are outstripped in all but the elementary stages of education.



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER XV.

GAZETTEER.

Badalgachhi.—A village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated on the Jamuna river 7 miles west of the Akkelpur station, 12 miles east of Mahādebpur and 10 miles north-west of Naogāon. It contains a police-station, a Middle English school, a girls' school, and no less than 9 zamindari cutcherries. There is a *dargāh* or tomb of a *pīr* called Sabud Sāheb, which is venerated by Hindus and Muhammadans alike.

Badalgāchhi has undergone more than one change in jurisdiction. In the beginning of the nineteenth century it was in Dinājpur; in 1821 it was transferred to Bogra; and in 1897 it was transferred to Rājshāhi. It is mentioned by Buchanan Hamilton (*circa* 1807) as the head-quarters of a thana, abounding in *jujub* trees, from which it derived its name, and chiefly remarkable for the manufacture of sugar.*

Bagatipara.—A village in the Nātor subdivision, picturesquely situated on the Baral river close to the Gālimpur ferry and 1 mile west of the Mālanchi railway station. It is the head-quarters of a police-station, which was carved out of Nātor a few years ago. Adjoining it is Lakshmanhātī, with a branch of the firm of Renwick and Company, which does a large business in letting out sugarcane mills to cultivators. At Mālanchi there is an inspection bungalow and a combined post and telegraph office.

Bagha.—A village in the Sadar subdivision, situated near the Ganges 25 miles south-east of Rāmpur Boālia. It is on the Pābna road six miles north of Rājapur, 11 miles from Charghat and eight miles from Bilmariā. It contains a fine old mosque, which is little if at all inferior to other buildings of the same period at Gaur: it is a protected monument kept in repair by Government. This mosque stands on the bank of a large tank, a quarter mile in length and 600 feet in breadth, which was excavated at the same time. It is a brick building of the Bengali style characteristic of the buildings at Gaur and

* Montgomery Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. II (1838), pages 668-70.

measures 80 feet by 36 feet on the outside, exclusive of the corner towers. The vaulted roof of the building, which had four domes, collapsed during the earthquake of 1897. Four black stone pillars which supported them are still standing inside the mosque. There are five arched entrances in the east wall, which is 7½ feet thick : it is all brickwork and has a facing of panels with simple ornamental designs. There are two large *mīhrābs* and one small *mīhrāb* in the western wall, also with ornamental work. There is one inscription over the central doorway in the eastern wall, and another lies loose inside the mosque; both are in Arabic and inscribed in the Tughra character. The former records the fact that the mosque was built by Nasrat Shah, son of Husain Shah in 930 A. H., *i.e.*, 1523 A.D., the latter that the same King built the gate of the mosque in the same year.* Nasrat Shah, King of Bengal, ruled at Gaur from 925-39H. (1518-32 A.D.), and like his father was a great builder of mosques. The mosque is now the property of Government and is not used for prayer by the people of Bagha.

Bāgha is the head-quarters of an estate called the Bāgha Wakf estate, the origin of which is as follows. In 925 H, *i.e.*, in 1507 A.D., a devotee named Hazrat Maulāna Shāh Danlah came and settled in Bāgha. His tomb may be seen in a small cemetery in the mosque compound with those of five of his relatives. In 1615 A.D. his grandson Maulāna Hazrat Shāh Abdul Wāheb received by a *pharmān* (letters patent) of the Mughal Emperor, a free grant of 42 villages yielding Rs. 8,000 a year for the support of his family; the *pharmān* has been lost. Subsequently his son, Maulāna Shāh Muhammad Rafiq, parcelled out half of the estate among his brothers and dependants (whose descendants now hold as *aimādārs*) and made an endowment of the other half for the maintenance of a religious and charitable establishment with the reservation that the offices of Mutwali (a trustee or manager charged with the administration of the temporal concerns) and Sajjādanashin (a spiritual superior entrusted with the conduct of religious affairs) in connection with the establishment should devolve in hereditary succession on his lineal male heirs in the male line of descent : the ablest, most learned and most pious of the founder's descendants was to hold these offices. The

* I am indebted for the translation of these inscriptions to Babu Akshay Kumar Maitra of the Varendra Research Society and Maulvi Abdul Hakim, Professor of Arabic and Persian, Rajshahi College.

estate is still called the Rafiqi Wakf estate after its founder. His tomb is in a cemetery to the north of the mosque : in another small cemetery are the tombs of two Saiyids from Baghdad. This endowment was recognised by a *sanad* given by the Governor General in Council in 1806 placing the estate in possession of one of the founder's descendants with an exhortation to apply the proceeds to religious and charitable uses, according to the purpose of the founder, keeping a reasonable sum for his personal requirements.

The estate is now held by Amīrul Islām, who is generally called the Rais of Bāgha : he is the twelfth Rais. When it was founded, the endowment was estimated to yield an income of Rs. 2,337 a year, but the receipts have now increased to about Rs. 16,000 a year.

Legend relates that the imperial *pharmān* was granted under the following circumstances. Prince Shāh Jahān, son of the Emperor Jahāngīr, when on his way to Dacca, camped near Bāgha where a famous *fakīr* was living. The Emperor, hearing of his fame, went to him and begged that he would cure him of a disease of the stomach from which he was suffering. The *fakīr* effected a miraculous cure, and the grateful Emperor was anxious to reward his services by a substantial grant of land. This the ascetic, who was devoted to spiritual things, refused. His eldest son likewise declined the offer, but the youngest son was prevailed upon to accept the grant.

In the Bāgha *milik* or estate there is a separate era differing from the Bengali era. The *milik* year begins from the month of Agrahāyan, whereas the Bengali year begins from the month of Baisākh. The *milik* year is observed for the payment of rents.

Balihār.—A village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated 11 miles west of Naogāon, with which it is connected by a *kutcha* road. To reach the place one goes along the Naogāon-Mahādebpur road till a few hundred yards beyond the ninth mile post, where there is a mango grove and a large tank. This was excavated by the Raja of Balihār in 1887 to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria and was called Kusam Dirghika after his wife Rani Kusam Kāmini Devi. A road on the left then takes one to Balihār, which is exactly 2 miles from the tank. The village is the head-quarters of the Balihār Rāj, and is chiefly remarkable for the large number of tanks scattered about it—some 50 or 60 in number. Local legend relates that they were excavated by the army of Mān Singh, when he was engaged in a campaign against the Pathān

chiefs of Bengal. The largest, which is nearly entirely silted up, is attributed to Mān Singh himself : it lies between the road and a garden of the Balihār Rāj, a short distance from the village. In the garden there is a small but well-equipped bungalow, commonly called the Garden House, which is maintained for visitors. Nearly all the tanks have silted up, but a few are still fine sheets of water.

The Rājbari of the Balihār Rāj is a closely packed collection of buildings. One of them serves as a dispensary. The dispensary was formerly located in a building outside the Rājbari, which was abandoned in consequence of the injury it sustained in the earthquake of 1897. There are also two temples said to be one hundred years old with carved brick plaques round the doors. In a panel at the foot of one of them may be seen an unusual carving—a horse-drawn carriage, which is an exact counterpart of the modern phaeton gharry ("fitun") of Calcutta. In front of the Rājbari is a nine-wheeled *rath*, or car, of solid brass, with figures of Hindu deities, which is used in the annual Car Festival of Jagannāth. This car was constructed in 1819 and the Rājrajeshwari temple four years earlier. The village also contains a girls' school and a boys' Middle English school. The old name of the village is Kurmail.

The founder of the Balihār Rāj family was a Brahman named Nrisinha Sānyāl Chakravarti, who came to Balihār from the Bikrampur *pargana* in Dacca, about 200 years ago. He obtained the patronage of the Khān zamindar of Balihār, married his patron's daughter and was given a *tāluk*. He dropped the name of Chakravarti and is generally known simply as Nrisinha Sānyāl. His grandson, Rāmākānta Sānyāl, is said to have been given the title of Rāj as a personal distinction. After his death the family estate was largely augmented by grants given by Rani Satyabati of Bāhirband. Krishnendu, the eldest son of Rāmākānta, married the sister of Rani Satyabati, the dowry being Lakshmanpur in *pargana* Saruppur; from him is descended the Lakshmanpur family. Rāmram and Prānkrishna, the second and third sons, held posts in the Rani's zamindari, and about 1733 received from her a grant of *pargana* Bāhirband, besides several *tālukes*, which constituted the nucleus of the Balihār estate in Rangpur and Dinājpur.

The property, which was at first joint, was divided between Rāmram and the eldest son of Prānkrishna : from them have sprung two branches known as the nine annas and seven annas share-holders. The present Balihār Rāj

family is descended from Rāmchandra and is known as the seven annas branch. Rāmchandra had a younger brother named Jagannāth, who failed to secure a share. It is said that he appealed to the Emperor Alamgīr, who granted him a *sanad* declaring his right to a one anna share, but after his death Rāmchandra annexed it, and his descendants (who still live at Balihār) are in humble circumstances.

The next addition to the family fortunes was secured by the marriage of Rāmchandra's grandson, Rājendra Rāy, to Kāsiswari Devi, daughter of Raja Rāmkrishna of Nātor (the adopted son of the famous Rani Bhawāni). Her dowry and subsequent gifts of the Nātor Rāj made Rājendra the owner of various properties in Rājshāhi, Bogra and Pābna, and he added still further to the estate by purchase. Kāsiswari died young, and Rājendra then married Anandamayi Devi, and, still failing to get a son, took a third wife, whose son died in infancy. After Rājendra's death in 1823, Anandamayi managed the estate for 29 years and adopted a son, Siva Prasād, whom she outlived. Siva Prasād married thrice, but died childless, and his second wife Hara Sundari adopted Krishnendra Rāy.

Krishnendra Rāy founded the present dispensary in 1878, was created a Raja and died in 1898. He married first Siva Sundari Devi, and then, being childless, Ganesjanani Devi, who was also childless. He then adopted the present proprietor Saradindu Rāy, the son of one of the nine annas Balihār zamindars, who was born in 1877; he bears the courtesy title of Kumār with the sanction of Government. His only son and heir is Bimalendu, who was born in 1898 and will attain his majority in 1916. The proprietor has recently executed a registered deed of settlement transferring the whole property to his son, retaining an allowance for his personal maintenance. The son being a minor, there are two trustees, viz., his father and a gentleman of Mymensingh, who will act until he attains his majority. The income of the estate is Rs. 2,30,000, and the Government revenue and cesses payable annually amount to Rs. 55,000.

Bhandarpur.—A village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated on the road from Badalgāchi to the Akkelpur railway station, 3 miles from the former and 4 miles from the latter. It contains a charitable dispensary maintained by the District Board.

Bilmaria.—A village in the extreme south west of Nātor, situated 3 miles from Lālpur, 7 miles from the Gopālpur

railway station, and 2 miles from Bengāri, a steamer station on the Ganges. It is the head-quarters of the Rājāpur concern of the Midnapur Zamindari Company. The bungalow is situated in well laid-out grounds and is approached by a fine revenue. The Company maintains a dispensary, which is largely attended. Good snipe shooting and fair pig-sticking can be had in the neighbourhood.

Dayarampur.—A village in the Nātor sub-division, situated on the Baral river in the fifth mile of the road from Mālanchi railway station to Wālia; the river is here crossed by a ferry. It is the headquarters of the junior branch of the Dighāpatia Rāj and is owned by Basanta Kumar Rāy, B.L., and Sarat Kumar Rāy, M.A., the second and third brothers of Raja Pramada Nāth Rāy of Dighāpatia. Their residence is a fine house built in modern style and surrounded by a well kept garden. The village of Nandikuja, where the river Nandakuja—the difference between the names of the river and village is curious—takes off from the Baral, is one mile farther down the river and contains the ruins of an indigo factory.

Dighāpatia.—A village in the outskirts of Nātor town, which is chiefly notable for being the head-quarters of the Dighāpatia Rāj and containing the residence of the Rāja. It is situated in well kept grounds surrounded by a fine moat. The buildings are modern and supplied with electric light. They include a well equipped guest house and an imposing gateway.

The founder of the Dighāpatia Rāj was a Tili by caste, named Dayarām Rāy (*circa* 1680-1760), who was the Diwān of Rāmjiban Rāy, the founder of the Nātor Rāj. He is said to have led a successful expedition against the rebellious zamindar Rāja Sitārām Rāy of Jessore, after which Sitārām Rāy's estate was transferred to his master Rāmjiban Rāy. The latter rewarded his services with grants of land in Rājshāhi and Jessore, which formed the nucleus of the present large estate, while the Nawāb Murshid Kuli Khān gave him the title of Ray Rayān. After the death of Rāmjiban Rāy, Dayaram served as Diwān under his successor Rāmkanta and after the latter's death under his widow, the celebrated Rāni Bhawāni, and obtained other large grants of land. He was succeeded by his son Jagannāth Rāy (*circa* 1745-90) and he in his turn by Prānnāth Rāy and the latter by an adopted son, Prasanna Nāth Rāy.

Prasanna Nāth Rāy (1826-62) was given the title of Rāja Bahādūr in 1854 in recognition of his generosity and public

spirit. In 1850 he paid the entire cost of the road from Nātor to Rāmpur Boālia. Two years later he established a high school at Dighāpatia, which is hence known as the Prasanna Nāth High English School, and in the same year (1852) he handed over to the Government a lakh of rupees for endowing this school and the charitable dispensary at Nātor and for founding a charitable dispensary at Rāmpur Boālia. He also built a temple to Kālī and endowed it with a considerable property, the proceeds of which are utilized for feeding the poor. During the Mutiny he was appointed an Assistant Magistrate in the district of Rājshāhi, and a small body of police was placed under his orders. He adopted Pramatha Nāth, a direct descendant of Dayarām Rāy through one of his daughters, and died in 1862.

Pramatha Nāth Rāy (1849-83) was equally liberal and public-spirited, and also received the title of Rāja Bahādur. Among other works of beneficence may be mentioned the construction of a building for the Rāmpur Boālia dispensary. He founded the Rājshāhi Association and gave a lakh and-a-half of rupees in the name of the Association to raise the Rājshāhi College to the status of a first grade college. He also established a girls school at Dighāpatia and another at Rāmpur Boāliā. He was nominated a member of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1877. Before his death he executed a will by which he bequeathed his ancestral properties to his eldest son, Pramada Nāth, and his considerable self-acquired properties to his three younger sons.

The present Rāja, Pramada Nāth Rāy, was born in 1873. In 1894 he took over his estate from the Court of Wards and in 1897 was given the personal title of Rāja. In 1909 he was elected by the landholders of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam to represent their interests in the Imperial Legislative Council. He has followed the family tradition of generosity, *e.g.*, he gave Rs. 25,000 for the improvement of the Rāmpur Boālia dispensary, Rs. 7,000 for rebuilding the Nātor dispensary, Rs. 15,000 for rebuilding the high school at Dighāpatia and Rs. 20,000 to the Lady Dufferin Fund. He also placed at the disposal of the Government 80 bighas of land for the establishment of an agricultural farm at Rāmpur Boālia, and when the Sericultural School was started there, he made a gift of 34 bighas of land to it. To the Rājshāhi College he has given lands valued at Rs 25,000. The Rāja maintains a charitable dispensary and High School at Dighāpatia and has also established a High School at Nuokila in the district of Bogra. His

eldest son, Prathiva Nāth Ray, has been granted the courtesy title of Kumar by Government.

The Rajā has three younger brothers, who have independent estates of their own. The eldest, Basanta Kumar Rāy, lives a retired life at Dayarāmpur in the Nātor subdivision. The next brother, Sarat Kumār Rāy, who also lives at Dayarāmpur is interested in archaeology and helped to found the Varendra Research Society of Rājshāhi, of which he is the President. The youngest, Hemendra Kumar Rāy, lives at Rāmpur Bôālia.

The district owes much to the beneficence of this family, and it is interesting to observe the number of institutions founded by the Rajas and called P. N. Ray after them, P. N. being the initials of all the Rajas since Prannāth Ray.

Dubalhāti.—Village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated 5 miles south-west of Naogāon. It is the head-quarters of the Dubalhāti Rāj and contains a dispensary and high school (both of which are maintained by the Rāj) as well as a post and telegraph office. The *bills* round Dubalhāti are noted for excellent duck shooting and for their crops of *boro* paddy.

The Dubalhāti Rāj family is one of the oldest families in the district, tracing back its history for 54 generations. Its founder was Jagatrām Rāy, a merchant of Jangsherpur, a village in Murshidābād on the right bank of the Padma. Legend relates that, when he was travelling with several boats laden with merchandise, he came up a river which runs through the Dubalhāti estate and moored for the night at Kasba, a village 2 miles north of Dubalhāti. The goddess Rājrajeswari appeared to him in a dream and directed him to settle there and build a temple in her honour. This he did, and gradually became master of all the neighbouring country. At that time it was mostly waste land with a few scattered hamlets, but gradually Jagatrām and his descendants cleared the jungle, settled tenants on the land and brought it under cultivation.

Legend goes on to say that this reached the ears of the Mughal Nawāb (or even the Emperor himself), who called the Rāja to his court and demanded revenue. He replied that the land produced nothing, but was a watery waste. The Nawāb insisted that there must be some produce, and the astute Rāja then declared there was nothing but fish. Thereupon his annual revenue was fixed at 22 *kāhāns*, i.e. about 22,000, of *koi* fish. The astuteness of the Rāja is further apparent from *koi* fish being selected, this being the cheapest species he could find.

After the death of Muktārām (the 46th of the line), the estates were divided between his two sons, and both left Kasba. The younger brother, Raghurām, received a seven annas share and came to Dubalhāti. Krishnarām had a nine annas share and removed to Mainām. The change of residence is said to have been due to the belief that if they stayed any longer at Kasba, they would be childless. Certain it is that Krishnarām had no issue, and though his widow adopted four sons, one after another died during her life-time. After these successive disappointments she sold her share of the property to the zamindars of Balihār and Damnāsh.

The elder branch thus died out. The present members of the family are descendants of Raghurām. Haranāth Ray Chaudhuri, the father of the present zamindars, was made a Rāja in 1875 and a Rāja Bahādur in 1877 in recognition of the assistance he rendered during the famine of 1874 and other acts of benevolence. *Inter alia*, he made a gift of landed property, yielding Rs. 5,000 a year, to raise the Government Zila School at Rāmpur Boālia to the status of a college (the present Rājshāhi College). After his death his widows managed the estate with other executors of his will; the building of the charitable dispensary at Naogāon was erected by them. The present proprietors are Kumār Ghanada Nāth Ray Chaudhuri, who bears the courtesy title of Kumār, and his step-brother, Krinkari Nāth Rāy Chaudhuri. The family claims to be Vaisya and calls itself Barendra Shāha. A survey and settlement of the estate was made about 25 years ago in consequence of disputes between the zamindar and his tenants.

Godagari.—Village in the Sadar subdivision, situated on the northern bank of the Padma 19 miles north-west of Rāmpur Boālia and a few miles south-east of the junction of the Padma and Mahānanda. It is the head-quarters of a thana and contains a charitable dispensary, sub-registry office, excise warehouse, and a District Board inspection bungalow. It is the terminus of the Katihār-Godāgāri branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway; a short length of line connects it with Godāgāri Ghāt, from which a ferry steamer plies to Lālgola Ghāt on the opposite bank of the Ganges, from which the railway goes direct to Calcutta. It is an outlet for the grain trade of the Barind, and there is a considerable export from it by river.

Godāgāri was a place of refuge for the inhabitants of Murshidābād during the Marāthā raids. According to the

Sair-ul-Mutakharin, "The peaceful inhabitants of this great capital who, far from having ever seen such devastations, had not so much as the cover of a wall, became exceedingly fearful for their properties and families; and they availed themselves of the rainy season to cross over to the countries on the other side of the Ganges, such as Jahāngīrnagar, Mālda and Rāmpur Boālia, where most of them built themselves houses, and where they passed their lives. Even the Deputy Governor himself, Nawāzish Muhammad Khān, crossed over with his family furniture and wealth, and lived at Godāgāri, which is one day's distance from the city, and where he laid the foundation for himself and family. Ali Vardi Khān's furniture and effects were likewise sent over." The ruins of Kila Bāruipāra, which served as a fort of refuge, are still partially discernible.

Gurudaspur.—A village and police-station in the east of the Nātor subdivision close to the Chalan Bil and the border of the district Pābna. It is a thriving river mart on the bank of the Gumāni as the lower course of the Nandakuja is called. There are several doctors in the place, and a small reading room and library have been started. At Chānchkoir, a Muhamnadan village about one mile down the river, there is a pleasant site for camping on the river bank. Biyāghāt, 2 miles up the river, contains an important cutcherry of the Sitlai estate of Pābna. Further up the river is Nāzirpur, where excellent *ghī* can be obtained; and beyond Nāzirpur is Chandrapur with the ruins of an indigo factory. From this latter place eastwards the Nandakuja has taken possession of the old bed of the Atrai, which has almost entirely silted up as far as Lālor westwards.

Kalam.—A village in the Nātor subdivision situated on the south-west margin of the Chalan Bil. Kalam is well known for its trade in fish and its manufacture of brass and bell-metal ware. It is a large and populous village as is shown by a popular proverb current in the east of the district—*Gāon dekhato Kalam, Bil dekhato Chalan, Sib dekhato Tālam* i. e., If you want to see a village, go to Kalam; if you want to see a *bil*, go to the Chalan; if you want to see a Siva, go to Tālam. Tālam is a village in the north-east of the Chalan Bil, and the reference is to a shrine of Siva, vows at which are believed to be regularly fulfilled. Ekānnabigha, 7 miles south-east of Kalam on the way to Gurudāspur, is another well-known village in the Chalan Bil.

Kasimpur.—A village in the south of the Naogaon subdivision situated on the river Jamuna. It is the headquarters

of the Kāsimpur estate, a large estate owned by an old family of Kulīn Brahmans. The grandfather of the present proprietor, Grish Chandra Lahiri, received the title of Rai Bahadur in 1871 in acknowledgment of his liberality in assisting the residents of Rāmpur Boālia who had suffered from an inundation in 1867 and also in establishing a Middle English School at Kāsimpur. His son, Kedar Prasanna Lahiri, gave a donation of Rs. 15,000 for the establishment of an industrial school in Rāmpur Boālia and in 1897 established a charitable dispensary at Kāsimpur to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. He received the title of Rai Bahadur in 1898 and died in 1916. He has been succeeded by his son, Annada Prasanna Lahiri, who in 1906 married the eldest sister of Birendra Nath Ray of the Nātor Chota Taraf.

Khetur.—A village in the Sadar subdivision, situated 13 miles west of Rāmpur Boālia and 2 miles north of Premtali, a village and steamer station on the road to Godāgāri. It has a repute for sanctity from its having been the home of Narottam Thākur, a Vaishnava saint and follower of Chaitanya, the great Hindu religious reformer of the sixteenth century. A large religious fair, which lasts three days, is held in October, which is attended by many thousands of persons. The number varies from 10,000 to 20,000. It attracts Vaishnavas and Bairāgis of all denominations, more particularly from Rājshāhi, Pābna, Nadia and Murshidābād. The custom is for the pilgrims to bathe at Premtali and then visit the temple at Khetur.

Legend relates that the great Vaishnava Apostle, Chaitanya, in the course of his wanderings, crossed the Padma and bathed in the river at Premtali, meaning the place of (spiritual) love; here also a fair is held at the same time as the fair at Khetur. Khetur itself was the home of Narottam Dās, who is described as a princely ascetic, "son and heir of Raja Krishna Chandra Dutta of Srīkheturi, who left his vast wealth and his palace, when only a lad of sixteen and walked on foot to Brindāban. He lived there a life of piety and devotion, which lights up the sky of the Vaishnava community immediately after the halo of Chaitanya Deva's personality has passed away from it. Narottam's life is described by Harahari Chakravarti, in his famous work *Narottam Vilās*. Though only a Kayastha by birth, his influence was so great that many good Brahmīns like Gauga Nārāyan Chakravarti became his willing disciples, and acknowledged him as their spiritual head. Narottam, though belonging to the Kayastha caste, was

called Thākur, a title generally applied in Bengal to Brahmins only.* " His place of meditation was near a cluster of tamarind trees west of the temple, which is still a hallowed spot to Bairagis. The temple which is an insignificant brick building, contains the images of Gauranga (Chaitanya), of his wife Vish-nupriya Devi and of his chief disciple Nityānanda.

Kusumba.—Village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated 3 miles south of Mānda on the road from Mānda to Rāmpur Boālia. It contains one of the few buildings of archaeological merit in the district. This is a fine old stone mosque standing on the bank of a really beautiful tank. The latter is a clear sheet of water, 1,250 feet long by 900 feet broad. According to legend, the mosque was built 300 years ago by one Sābar Khān, a Brahman zamindar, who turned Musalmān. He was seized and imprisoned by the then Nawāb, perhaps for arrears of revenue. While in prison, he sung to relieve the tedium of his confinement. The Begam was charmed by his voice and fell in love with him. She interceded for him with the Nawāb, with such good effect that he released Sābar Khān, allowed him to go off with his wife and gave them as much as they could take out of the treasury in one *prahar* (2½ hours); with this spoil they built the mosque. The tale of the complaisant husband is too strange to be credible, and the love story recalls the familiar intrigues in which a man and his paramour rob an unsuspecting husband.

The mosque is of the Bengal style of architecture usual in the buildings at Gaur, and compares favourably with the mosques extant at that place. It is a square-shaped building with a roof slightly curved in imitation of a Bengali hut. On the roof are the remains of six domes. The walls are of grey stone, or at least are faced with stone, with panels carved in low relief. There are three doorways: over the central doorway is an inscription. The interior contains two richly carved *mīhrābs* of black stone, a large pulpit of grey stone and, above it, a third small *mīhrāb* also richly carved. The building suffered badly during the earthquake of 1897, and only two domes were left intact. All six domes were supported partly by the walls and partly by two central stone pillars. One pillar still helps to support the remaining two domes; the other pillar is a derelict, the domes which it upheld having disappeared. The large inscription over the central doorway records the fact that the mosque was built in 966 A.H., *i.e.*, 1558 A.D., in the reign of

* Dinesh Chandra Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature, pp 498-9.

Bahādur Shāh II, one of the Afghan Kings of Bengal. There is also a smaller and earlier inscription bearing the date 910 A.H., *i.e.*, 1503 A.D., which records the fact that it was set up in the reign of Husain Shāh.*

There is another small ruined mosque, 300 yards to the north-west, which is attributed to Sonā Bibi, the wife of Sābar Khān. It is a ruinous brick building rent asunder by, and overgrown with, the parasitic *pipal*. To the north of it is a large silted-up tank called Sonār Dighi, and to the south another small silted-up tank. The latter is said to have been used by the women of the place, who alone attended the ruined mosque.

Lakshmanhati.—See Bāgātipāra.

Lalpur.—Village in the south-west of the Nātor subdivision, situated near the Ganges 4 miles south-west of Gopālpur railway station. It is the head-quarters of a thana and contains a District Board inspection bungalow, a Middle Vernacular school and a dispensary maintained by the Puthia 5-annas estate.

Mahadebpur.—A village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated on the Atrai river 16 miles north-west of Naogāon and 9 miles north of Mānda. It is the head-quarters of a thana and contains a sub-registry office, a dispensary (maintained by private subscriptions) and a Middle English school. There is also a District Board inspection bungalow happily situated on a wide open *maidān* on the bank of the river Atrai. The village is notable as being a colony of Rārhi Brāhmans, who are somewhat rare in this land of Vārendra Brāhmans. There are three proprietors, whose shares are called the Bara Taraf, Chhota Taraf and Bāgānbāri, the last being named after the garden house of the proprietors.

Malanchi.—See Bāgātipāra.

Manda.—Village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated 21 miles west of Naogāon. The road to it passes through Balihār; there is an unbridged *khāl* at Satir Hāt 5 miles from Balihār which dries up in the hot weather. The village is situated on the right bank of the river Atrai, which is crossed by a ferry. It is the head-quarters of a thana, and there is a one-roomed inspection bungalow in the outskirts of the village: the name of the manza in which the bungalow is situated is Kālikāpur. A few yards from the bungalow is a small coppice called Dākinītala, in which goats are sacrificed to Dākinimā Durga.

* I am indebted for the decipherment and translation of the inscriptions to Maulvi Aḥḥul Hākīm, Professor, Rājshāhi College.

Tradition relates that dacoits used to worship her and offer sacrifices here before starting on their raids. The place has now the halo of sanctity, and Hindus make offerings on Tuesdays and Saturdays in the hope of obtaining the fulfilment of some cherished desire, such as a cure for illness.

The real name of the village is Dosati, and the name Mānda is only the official designation, which has been given to it since the head-quarters of the thana was moved here from the real Mānda, *i.e.*, Thākur Mānda, which forms the subject of the next paragraph. The local explanation of the name Dosati is that there are two villages, one on each side of the Atrai, which commemorate the fact that some ancient worthy had two wives (*dui satin*). Certain it is that this village is called Dosati, and the village on the other side of the river Dosatin.

Manda (Thakur).—Village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated on the west bank of the Mānda Bil. It is 4 miles in a straight line from Mānda thana, but it is cut off from it by the Mānda Bil. To reach it from Mānda one proceeds by a fair *cutch* road to Kālāmāri Ghāt (4 miles), where the river is crossed by a boat. The road is then a rough track meandering about in the fields for half a mile as far as Haripur Ghāt, where there is no ferry: there is, however, a rough bridge here in the hot weather. From this one goes along the edge of the Mānda Bil for 2 miles. Mānda itself is situated on the edge of the Parind, which here rises from the Bil. The village can also be reached across the fields from Bartali on the Haripur-Gāngor road. It contains a dispensary, Middle Vernacular school and several zamindari cutcherries.

Among Hindus the village has a wide local reputation on account of the sanctity of the temple of Raghunāth. * The shrine is of the usual pyramidal shape: in front of it is a semi-circular portico with Doric pillars. It is fairly modern, having been built by the pious Rani Bhawāni of Nātor (*circa* 1780). The image is said to be of immemorial antiquity and to have been dug up from the bed of the Mānda Bil. A *mela* is held here in the month of Phālgun (April-May) at the time of the Rāmnāvami or Bāsanti Puja; it is sometimes attended by as many as 20,000 persons. Raghunāth, it is said, has the power to restore sight to his devotees. Persons suffering from blindness and cataract therefore come and sit *dharna*, *i.e.*, remain fasting for one day, two days, or even, I am informed, three days, in order that the god may grant them their hearts' desire. Last year (1914) a European officer witnessed what was universally hailed by the assembled people as a miraculous

cure, but he could not satisfy himself whether it was a real cure or not.

Naogaon.—Head-quarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated on the right bank of the river Jamuna 4 miles west of Santahār railway station. It is connected with the latter by a metalled road, but there is no bridge across the river, which has to be crossed by a ferry boat. It contains the usual subdivisional offices, a Munsif's court, a sub-registry office, a large high school, a good girls' school, a small night school, a Sanskrit *tal*, a dāk bungalow and a public charitable dispensary called the Price dispensary after a former Collector of Rājshāhi. There is also a dispensary maintained by the Presbyterian Mission at Chakrāmpur, on the eastern side of the river about a mile from the town.

Naogaon is modern and contains no building of any interest. The largest and quite the most prosaic structures are the godowns in the *gānja* warehouse; here the *gānja* is brought for storage and kept till it is sold and exported. To this industry Naogaon owes its selection as a subdivisional head-quarters and its present prosperity. The records of the Collectorate show that the East India Company had a factory here as early as 1782, which was under the Resident at Kumārkhālī.

A little to the west of the town, on the side of the road to Mahādebpur, there is a tomb with an epitaph showing that it covers the remains of Lieutenant C. F. Cooke, R.E., Assistant Engineer in the Bogra Special Division, who died of cholera at Naogaon in 1875.

Naogaon Subdivision.—Northern subdivision of the district with an area of 860 square miles and a population of 517,495 persons. It is bounded on the north by the Dinājpur district, on the east by the Bogra district, on the south by the Bāgmāra and Tānor thanas of the Sadar subdivision and by the Singra and Nātor thanas of the Nātor subdivision, and on the west by the Bāgmāra thana and the Mālda district (Gomastapur thana).

The subdivision is intersected by the river Atrai, to the east of which there is much swampy water-logged land; on the north-west is the elevated, slightly undulating tract called the Barind. The Atrai river flows past Mahādebpur and Mānda on the south of the Barind, and is joined by the Jamuna, which runs from north to south near the Bogra border and passes through Naogaon town. East of the junction the Atrai bifurcates, and most of its water passes down

the northern branch known as the Gur; the southern branch is a narrow shallow stream choked with weeds and moribund. The high banks of these rivers are fringed with villages, and there are several large river marts on the Atrai. Beyond the villages the land slopes away to cultivated paddy land or perennial marsh. The most notable of these *bils* is the Mānda Bil near Thākūr Mānda, a clear sheet of water with rapidly sloping banks. It continues in a chain of *bils* to the south and east. There is also an enormous stretch of perennial swamp all round Dubalhāti village in the angle between the Atrai and the Jamuna. The area west of the Atrai beyond the *bils*, in Mānda and Mahādebpur thanas, is typical Barind. It is undulating country cut up by streams (called *khāris*) flowing in deep channels. The gentle slopes leading down to these streams are terraced into rice fields.

The chief crops are rice, jute, sugarcane and *gānja*. Rice is sown broadcast in the deeper *bils* and is transplanted in the higher lands of the Barind, where the water necessary for cultivation has to be retained by *ails*, i.e., small embankments round the fields. In the deeper *bils*, notably round Dubalhāti, a large quantity of summer rice (*boro dhān*) is grown. This is transplanted in the *bil* and reaped about the end of May and the beginning of June, when the water is at its lowest. Rice, specially *aus*, and jute grow abundantly on both sides of the Atrai and Jamuna rivers on the rich *pali* soil near their banks. Sugarcane is raised in the east of the Mahādebpur thana and the west of Badalgāchhi, while *gānja* is produced in the north of Naogāon and in some parts of the Mahādebpur thana. The south and east of the Naogāon thana contain much lowlying country, and the Pānchupur thana is so low that it remains under water half the year; the silt left by the inundations is very fertile, and rice, jute and bamboos grow abundantly.

Nātor.—Head-quarters of the Nātor subdivision situated on the Nārad river two miles from the Nātor railway station. It contains the usual offices of a subdivisional head-quarters, a Munsif's Court, a charitable dispensary, a sub-registry office, and a District Board bungalow. The last is close to the railway station. Some rooms in the subdivisional office building are also used as a Circuit House. This building and the Subdivisional Officer's residence date back to 1795, and are the oldest Government buildings in the district.

The town, being centrally situated, was selected for the head-quarters of Rijshāhi when it was first made a British

district and occupied that position till 1825, when the Courts were removed to Rāmpur Boālia on account of its unhealthiness. Even before this Nātor was noted for its insalubrity ; and we find the Collector submitting a representation on that account as early as 1788. Nor is this to be wondered at, as it is built on low marsh land. The Nārad river has, moreover, silted up and is no longer flushed by annual floods ; it is, in fact, a dead river. There are large *bils* in the neighbourhood, and the outskirts of the town are buried in rank jungle. The result is that the town is decadent, and its population has fallen from 9,674 in 1872 to 8,251 in 1901 in spite of the access of trade caused by the construction of the railway soon after the former year. The area of the town, *i.e.*, the area within municipal limits, is 2½ square miles.

The two chief defects of the town are the absence of a pure water-supply and an efficient system of drainage. The latter is a peculiarly difficult problem, for the town has, for the most part, been built up in low-lying land from the earth excavated from numerous tanks and hollows, which in their present condition are a complete bar to any really effective scheme of drainage. The problem, therefore, differs from an ordinary drainage scheme in so far as it involves building up the site of a town situated in a depression, instead of cutting drains to carry off surface water.

The most distinctive feature of the town is a huge shallow stagnant sheet of water called the Lāldighi, which was formerly a *bil* : it is said to have been excavated for building the Rājibāri of the Nātor Rāj. The Rājibāri is a collection of buildings of no particular architectural merit ; round it is a moat, called the *chauki*, which was excavated by Rāja Rāmjiban in the eighteenth century. Close to the Rājibāri are a dispensary and a High School maintained by the Maharaja of Nātor. There is another High School on the outskirts of the town at Dighāpatia, a village which contains the residence of the Rāja of Dighāpatia, a modern building with well laid-out grounds.

Nātor gives its name to the Nātor Rāj family. The founders of the fortunes of the family were two brothers named Raghunandan and Rāmjiban, whose father was a Brahman in the employ of the Rājas of Puthia. Raghunandan was first the Vakil of the Puthia Rāj at the Court of Murshid Kuli Khān at Murshidābād. He next obtained a post in the revenue establishment of the Nawāb and eventually rose to the position of Diwān or Financial Minister of the Nawāb. His

elder brother Rāmjibān soon began to acquire large landed property, receiving many confiscated and escheated estates through his influence. According to the *Riyazu-s-Salatīn*, the zamindar of Chakla Rājshāhi, which lay south of the Ganges, refused to pay the revenue demanded from him, and after being defeated in a pitched battle, committed suicide for fear of the anger of Murshid Kuli Khān. The latter then transferred his zamindari to Rāmjibān and to another Bengal zamindar, "who were punctual in payments of revenue." A few years later, a more famous zamindar, named Sitarām, of Mahmudpur in Jessore, rebelled, was defeated and hanged on a gallows in Murshidābād (with his face in a cowhide); after which his zamindari was transferred to Rāmjibān (circa 1712).

The zamindari of Rājshāhi, which was thus founded, was gradually extended and became one of the greatest estates in Bengal. It owed its origin to the severe revenue policy of Murshid Kuli Khān, under which zamindars were dispossessed of their estates on any failure in the payment of revenue, and the Viceroy either made grants of them to favoured persons or let them out to the highest bidder. "The zamindari of Rājshāhi," wrote Warren Hastings in 1786, "the second in rank in Bengal, and yielding an annual revenue of about 25 lakhs of rupees, has risen to its present magnitude during the course of the last 80 years by accumulating the property of a great number of dispossessed zamindars, although the ancestors of the present possessor had not, by inheritance, a right to the property of a single village within the whole zamindari."

The extent of the estate, when Warren Hastings wrote, will be realized from the fact that it is said to have extended into Bhagalpur on the west and as far as Dacca on the east, while on the south of the Ganges it included a great portion of the present districts of Murshidābād, Nadia, Jessore, Birbhām and even Burdwān. Holwell stated that it extended over "35 days' travel," and according to Grant's 'Analysis of the Finances of Bengal' it was "the most unwieldy extensive zamindari of Bengal or perhaps in India" and produced "at least four-fifths of all the silk, raw or manufactured, used in or exported from the effeminated luxurious Empire of Hindustan."

Rāmjibān made his headquarters at Nātor, where he built a Rājbari, tanks and temples. He was succeeded in 1730 by an adopted son, Rāmakanta, to whose natural father Rāmjibān gave the *parganas* of Chaugrām in Rājshāhi and Islāmābād

in Rangpur, which are still held by his descendants, who are known locally as the Rājās of Changrām. Rāmākanta died in 1748, after which the estate was managed for half a century by his widow, Rani Bhawāni. The Rani is to this day famous for piety, charity and munificence, and it is not too much to say that her name is a household word among the Hindus of Bengal. At Benares alone she is said to have established 380 shrines, guest-houses, etc., and many temples were built in other parts of the country and endowed with money and land. The great embanked road in the Nātor subdivision which runs east to Bhawānpur in Bogra, and is still called Rani Bhawani's *Jangal*, was constructed by her, and numerous tanks and sarais were built with her money. Doctors were entertained to give medical relief to the poor in different villages, and her charity extended even to the animal world, men being engaged to feed cattle and birds and even to put sugar into antholes. Her generosity to Brahmins was lavish, and she is said to have given 100,000 *bighas* of land to them free of rent. Altogether, she is credited with spending 50 crores of rupees in religious acts and charity.

Rani Bhawāni survived her husband 58 years and in her old age retired from the management of the estate, which devolved on her adopted son, Rāmkrishna. He was as unpunctual in the payment of revenue as the founder of the family had been punctual, and the estate which had owed its origin to this virtue rapidly dwindled. Within two years of the Permanent Settlement, the Government recorded that of the whole arrears outstanding for the Province about one-half was due from the zamindaris of Birbhūm and Rājshāhi. "Among the defaulters," says the Fifth Report, "were some of the oldest and most respectable families in the country. Such were the Rājās of Nadia, Rājshāhi, Bishnupur, Kāsijora and others, the dismemberment of whose estates at the end of each of succeeding year threatened them with poverty and ruin." On the death of Rāmkrishna in 1796 what was left of the estate passed to his two sons, Sibnāth and Biswanāth, and the family was divided into two branches known as the Bara Taraf and Chhota Taraf, *i.e.*, the senior and junior branches. The estate is said even then to have brought in 27 lakhs a year, and the elder son Biswanāth received zamindaris yielding 18 lakhs, while the younger son received all the *debottar* and revenue-free estates yielding 9 lakhs a year. Both, however, neglected their estates, which gradually dwindled down to their present dimensions.

The history of the Bara Taraf is one of childless proprietors and adopted sons. Biswanāth left no issue and his widow adopted Govinda Chandra, who died childless soon after attaining his majority. Govinda Chandra's widow then adopted Govinda Nāth, who also died childless, and the widow of Govinda Nāth adopted the present Maharaja, Jagadindra Nāth Ray. He was granted the personal title of Maharaja in 1877 and was elected a member of the Bengal Legislative Council by the landholders of the Rājshāhi Division in 1913. He maintains a High School and charitable dispensary at Nātor and is the patron of a well-known cricket team, the Nator XI. His son, Jogindra Nāth Ray, has the courtesy title of Kumar.

As regards the Chhota Taraf, the successor of Sibnāth was his son, Anandanāth Ray, who was given the title of Raja Puhadur and was also made a C. S. I. He died in 1886 and was succeeded by his son, Chandranāth, who was made a Raja and C. I. E. On the death of Chandranāth in 1875 the estate passed to his younger brother, Jogendranath, who died in 1900. The heir is his grandson, Firendra Nāth, who is a student of the Calcutta University and will shortly attain his majority. During his minority the estate has been managed by executors with his mother, as managing executrix. His eldest sister is married to Annada Prasanna Lahiri of Kāsimpur and his second sister to Naresh Narayan Ray of Puthia.

It may not be out of place to mention that Rai Kisori Chand Mitra, a well-known Anglo-Bengali litterateur and the first Indian Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, was Subdivisional Officer of Nātor about sixty years ago.

Nator Subdivision.—The south-eastern subdivision of the district with an area of 864 square miles and a population of 398,958 persons. It is bounded on the north by the Naogāon subdivision and the Bogra district, on the south by the river Padma and the Pābna district, on the east by the Pābna district and on the west by the Sadar subdivision. The subdivision is remarkable for the number and extent of its *bils*. These are found all over the subdivision except in police station Nandigrām (*i.e.*, the northern half of thana Singra) where the Barind rises from the *bil* country, and thana Lalpur, where the Ganges has raised the land along its banks and the, only *bils* that remain are small and isolated. A wide belt of low land stretches across the subdivision from the north of Nātor thana eastwards with a continuous bend towards the south until it passes into Pābna district on the east of Baraigrām thana. The northern part of Singra thana is Barind

country. It is high and open, and the paddy, which is the only crop, is transplanted in plots in which the water is retained by *āils* sometimes as high as two feet.

The subdivision suffers from the prevalence of malaria, and Nātor town is, perhaps, the most unhealthy spot in the whole subdivision. The inhabitants are usually of poor physique and as often as not show signs of enlarged spleen. The only part of the subdivision which does not suffer in the same way is the northern half of Singra thana, under the Nandigrām police station. The inhabitants of this area are by contrast healthy and energetic, the country is open and there is practically no bamboo or low jungle.

There is a net-work of rivers and water-courses, and during the rainy season almost every part is accessible by boat, while people go from one house to another in big earthen tubs called *chāris*, which are propelled by miniature oars or poles and sometimes by the hands. The outlying portions of the *bils* dry up towards the close of the cold weather and are then brought under cultivation. In some *bils* there are small islands with a few huts on them, the residents of which have to depend upon boats and *chāris* for communication with the outside world and the supply of provisions.

The eastern extremity of the subdivision includes a portion of the great Chalan Bil, which is being gradually silted up and reclaimed. The Hālti Bil, which is situated to the north of Nātor, is also a big *bil* several square miles in area.

Niamatpur.—A village in the Naogaon subdivision, situated four miles north-west of Bartāli on the Haripur-Gāngor Road. It is in the heart of the Barind and contains a police-station which was specially created for the suppression of crime in a tract which had hitherto been remote from police supervision. It contains the residence of a Muhammadan zamindar named Habibar Rahmān Chaudhuri.

Paharpur.—A village in the extreme north-east of the Naogaon subdivision, situated 8 miles north-east of Badalgāchhi. It contains a remarkable tumulus which has not yet been excavated, but may very possibly cover the remains of a Buddhist stupa. The following account of it was given by Buchanan Hamilton: "I found it an immense steep heap of bricks, from 100 to 150 feet in perpendicular height, covered with bushes, and crowned by a remarkably fine tree. On ascending about half-way, I found three large rough stones, on which I had been led to expect an inscription; but I found afterwards that the

person who gave me the information, although a Brahmin and a zemindar, could not read. On the summit is a small chamber of brick, with a door facing the east, and a small niche towards the west. This is said to have been the residence of a Muhammadan hermit, which is very probable. The heap of bricks, or hill as it is called, had been surrounded by a square rampart, the ruins of which contain many bricks, and each side may be 400 yards in length. The rampart is overgrown with trees, but the space between it and the hill is clear, and contains some small tanks and indications of brick buildings, especially towards the corners of the rampart. The thickness of this would induce one to believe that the place might have been a fortress, but no ditch can be traced, and the heap, which is by far the most remarkable part of the ruin, could not have answered for defence. I am therefore inclined to believe that it has been a temple, and its great steepness and height induce me to suppose that it has been solid, like many of the temples of Buddha in Ava and Nepal; for a hollow temple, of which the roof had fallen in, would be much flatter. My conjecture is confirmed by the vicinity of the several places which are said to have belonged to the Pal family, who were worshippers of Buddha.”*

Pahārpur means the city of the hill, and another name mentioned by Buchanan Hamilton was “Goyal Chitar Pahar.” Goyal is a misprint for Gopāl, and the name means the hill of the cremation site of Gopāl. It may therefore mark the spot where the body of Gopāla, the first of the Pāla Kings, was cremated. Sir Alexander Cunningham, however, held that the mound might represent the ruins of a Brahmanical temple, as he found there a terra-cotta sculpture of a deity which he took to be the skeleton goddess Kālī. “The mound,” he says, “is about 200 feet from west to east, the highest point being 50 feet from the western base and 150 feet from the eastern base. It stands, in the middle of a large enclosure about 1,500 feet square outside, formed by a massive earthen embankment about 150 feet broad on the east side and not more than 100 feet on the other three sides.”

Pananagar.—A village in the Sadar subdivision, situated about 8 miles north of Puthia. It contains a dispensary maintained by the District Board. The place is somewhat difficult of access. To get to it from Puthia, one goes 4 miles along the Puthia-Tāhirpur road and then turns to the west following, for

* Montgomery Martin, *Eastern India* (1838), Vol. II, pages 669-70.

two miles, a track across the fields, which is good enough for a horse or bicycle in the cold weather. At the end of this track is the large village of Damdama, which is separated from Pānānagar by the Sonaikāudā Bil, 2 miles long, which contains a fair depth of water even in the cold weather. Along the edges however it is then so shallow that one can only get along on an elephant. Pānānagar can also be reached from Sibpur on the Nātor Road. Going north from that place one follows the Durgapur Road as far as the village of Pali Pokharia and then strikes off north-east by a Local Board Road, which brings one to the bank of the Huja river, on which Pānānāgar stands.

Puthia.—A village in the Sadar subdivision, situated 10½ miles west of Nātor. It is situated on the Puthia-Sardah Road, half a mile from the point where that road joins the road from Rāmpur Boālia to Nātor. The village is the head-quarters of a thana and contains a dispensary and High School. Both these institutions are maintained by Naresh Nārāyan Rāy, the owner of the Puthia 4-annas estate. His residence is in the village, as well as the Rājbari of the Puthia 5-annas estate. The Paresh Narayan dispensary, to give its full name, was established in 1866, and the present building was constructed in 1898 by his mother, Rāni Manomohini Devi, in memory of her husband, Paresh Nārāyan Rāy. The Paresh Narayan High School was founded in 1871. Close by the Bhubaneswar temple is a tall handsome shrine of Siva in the *Pancharatna* style, which overlooks a fine tank called the Siva Sāgar. The shrine was erected in 1823 by Rāni Bhuban Mayi Devi, widow of Rājā Jagat Narayan Ray of the 5-annas estate. Proceeding through the village we come to the Dol Mandap, a somewhat plain and simple building made up of several storeys, each smaller than the lower. On the east of this is a noble tank, the Govinda Sāgar, which was re-excavated in 1893 by Rāni Hemanta Kumāri Devi in memory of her husband Jatindra Nārāyan Rāy. The Rājbari of the 5-annas estate faces the Dol Mandap; this is a building of European style erected by the Rani in 1895 in memory of her husband. In the courtyard are two shrines of the family god, Govinda, both brick buildings richly adorned with finely carved brick plaques. One of these is a single-storeyed structure with a hump-backed roof in the familiar style of the Bengali hut; this is ruinous and abandoned having been badly damaged by the earthquake of 1897. The other temple, which is said to be 200 years old, has a central pyramidal tower and a small pyramidal tower at each corner. The image of Govinda is kept here for

ten days at a time, after which it is moved to a shrine of the 4-arnas estate for another ten days. Another old building of architectural interest is the Jhulan Mandir, which collapsed in the earthquake of 1897.

The founder of the Puthia Rāj family is said to have been a sage named Batsāchārya, who lived towards the end of the sixteenth century, A.D. The story of the foundation of the family fortunes is as follows. A great part of Rājshāhi was at that time held by a Pathān *jāgirdar* called Lashkar Khān: this chief's grant was called, after him, Lashkarpur. The subjugation of the rebellious Pathān chiefs of Bengal was, as is well known, one of the tasks Akbar had to perform in order to consolidate his empire. Mān Singh, one of his ablest general and Viceroys, was sent with a Moghul army against them, and on the way halted at the village (Chandrakda, 6 miles north-east of Puthia) where Batsāchārya lived. The sage had a wide reputation for learning and piety. Mān Singh consulted him and was much struck by his erudition and, in particular, by his knowledge of the forms of worship enjoined by the Tāntras. He offered him grants of land, which the sage, intent on the spiritual life, refused. His son Pitambar, however, was given a grant of Lashkarpur, which had presumably been confiscated for the rebellion of Lashkar Khān. The latter lived at Alaipur, a village on the Ganges, 12 miles south-east of Puthia, which to this day has precedence over all other *mahāls* at the *punya* of the *pargana*, i.e., the people of this village head the procession of rent-payers.

After Pitambar's death without issue the estate passed to his brother Nilambar, on whom the Emperor Jahāngīr is said to have conferred the title of Rāja. The son of Nilambar received a gift of half of the Tāhirpur Pargana from one of the old Rājas of Tahirpur (a line now extinct) which largely added to the extent of the estate. About 1744 a partition of the estate was made between four brothers, the eldest receiving 4-annas, to which each of the younger brothers added half an anna out of respect, it is said, for the claim of primogeniture, so that his share became 5½-annas and their shares 3½-annas.

The five-annas estate.—The share of the eldest brother is still known as the 5-annas estate, but actually, owing to a subsequent partition between two brothers in 1807, only half of it is held by the 5-annas estate: the other half was sold at an auction sale and eventually was purchased recently by

* J. N. Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects* (1896).

Hemendra Kumār Rāy of the junior branch of the Dighapatia Raj.

The proprietors have a good record for works of public munificence, which are due, to a large extent, to the Rānis, and especially to Maharani Sarat Sundari, widow of Jagendra Nārāyan Rāy, whose name, it has been said, "is venerated throughout India for her extensive charities and for her character as a model Hindu widow."* Among other works of utility may be mentioned the erection of a boarding house for the students of the Rājshāhi College and the establishment of the Sanskrit College at Rāmpur Boālia. She was made a Rāni in 1875 and a Mahārāni in 1877. The present proprietress is a widow, Rāni Hemanta Kumāri Devi, who was given the personal title of Rāni in 1901.

The four-annas estate.—There is at present only one four-annas estate, this being one of the shares (originally $3\frac{1}{2}$ annas) created at the partition above referred to. It is held by Naresh Nārāyan Rāy, who resides at Puthia, where he maintains the high school and dispensary. It was under the management of the Court of Wards till he attained his majority in 1909. He is known locally as the Chārāni Kumār and has married a sister of Birendra Nath Ray of the Nātor Chota Taraf.

The one-anna estate.—There is also a one-anna estate, which is held by two brothers, viz., Nripendra Nārāyan Rāy and Khagendra Nārāyan Rāy, who are in reduced circumstances. They are locally known as the Ek-anna Kumārs. Their estate was under the Court of Wards and was released in 1912.

Rajapur.—A village in the Naogāon subdivision, situated about a mile north-west of Thākur Mānda. A curious legend attaches to the place. It is said that it was the capital of a Hindu Rāja, whose life was miraculously renewed from day to day. In the morning he was a babe, at mid-day he was a young man in the prime of life, in evening he was an old man, and at night he died. This strange existence was terminated by a Musalmān, who killed a cow in front of his palace. The shock caused by this infamous act was so great that the Rāja died at once and never revived. The Rāja's palace is said to have had floors made of glass, but no trace of this or of any other building survives. Considering the rarity of glass in Bengal, the tradition seems curious, but it probably refers to glazed tiles. The remains of mounds, tanks, and scattered bricks show, however, that Rājāpur was once a prosperous place.

There is another village of Rājāpur to the south-west of Chārgḥāt in the Sadar subdivision, which contains a police-station. The original village of Rājāpur has been washed away by the Ganges, and the real name of the village is Pānikāmra.

Rampur Boalia.—Head-quarters of the district, situated on the north bank of the river Padma. Its population in 1911 was 23,406, of whom 12,981 were Hindus and 10,325 were Muhammadans. The town occupies a long narrow strip between the river Padma and some low-lying country inland, and the area within municipal limits is 4½ square miles. Its length (from Raipāra to Kājla Post Office) is six miles and its average breadth is three-quarters of a mile.

The name is due to the fact that it originally consisted of two villages, viz., Rāmpur and Boālia. It is frequently referred to by villagers as Rāmpur, and the name of the thana of which it is the headquarters is Boālia. It is also commonly called Rājshāhi, which is the postal and telegraphic designation as well as the name of the steamer station. The civil station is situated in a Government estate called Srirāmpur, where there is a spacious *maidān*; the offices and courts of the Collector and District Judge are located in Bulanpur, 2 miles from the town, where there is also a Constables' Training School. Rāmpur Boālia is a place somewhat difficult of access, being without a railway. The only two practicable means of reaching it are by road (28 miles) from Nātor on the line to Darjeeling, or by steamer from Lālgola Ghāt on the Ganges where steamers connect with the railway line from Calcutta.

In the map of Bengal made by Van den Broucke, a Dutch Governor in 1660, a road is shown as starting from Rāmpur Boālia which passed through the districts of Rājshahi, Pābna (*viā* Hariāl), Bogra and Rangpur to the Assam border—a great military road. The earliest historical mention of Rāmpur Boālia that I have been able to trace occurs in the *Sair-ul-Mutākhari*n, which states that in the middle of the eighteenth century many of the inhabitants of Murshidābād fled across the Ganges to escape the Marāṭha raids and sought refuge at Rāmpur Boālia and other places where “they built themselves houses and passed their lives.” The town had by this time become an *entrepot* of the Dutch trade in silk and other goods, which centred in their factory, which is still called the Bara Kothi. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the French also set up a small concern, for a report of 1784 from Mr. Collinson, Resident at “Fauleah” states:—“From the result of the most

accurate information I have been able to collect relative to the trade heretofore carried on by the French East India Company, it appears they have never possessed any regular factory or establishment within this division; but I understand they rented about nine years ago a small house in the neighbourhood of Ramporo, where they provided a quantity of the country-wound silk under the inspection and management of a native gomastah, and to this particular object their commercial operations were solely and intimately confined."

The English had a Commercial Resident at Boālia, and their trade in the Rājshāhi silk was obviously very extensive, for in 1787 the Commercial Resident was given an advance of Rs. 75,000, or half that allotted to Cossimbazar, for investment in silk. It was not however until 1825 that it was made the head-quarters of the district, a measure necessitated by the unhealthiness of Nātor, where the Collector lived until that year. Rāmpur Boālia was for some time the head-quarters of the Rājshāhi Division, as well as of the district, but the absence of railway facilities made it very difficult of access from other parts of the division, and in 1888 the Commissioner moved his head-quarters to the more accessible station of Jalpaiguri.*

Historically the most interesting building in the town is the old Dutch factory called the Bara Kothi, i.e., the "big house." This building is now identically the same as when occupied by the Dutch, for certain later additions were so damaged by the earthquake of 1897 that they had to be demolished, thus restoring the building to its original dimensions. A visitor cannot but be struck by the thickness of the walls and also by the darkness of the rooms on the lower floor, which were obviously used as silk store rooms. After its relinquishment by the Dutch, this building was the English Commercial Residency and continued to be so until the East India Company gave up its commercial operations in 1833. It then passed into the hands of Messrs. Robert Watson and Company, a firm which carried on the silk and indigo industries on a large scale; and it was the head-quarters of the European Volunteer force during the Mutiny. A few years ago it was acquired by the Midnapore Zamindari Company, which has let part of it to the India General Navigation and Rivers Steam Navigation Companies for use as the residence and office of their local agent.

The Bara Kothi was strongly fortified when it was held by

* The head-quarters of the Division were at Berhampore until 1875, when the district of Murshidābād was transferred from the Rājshāhi Division to the Presidency Division.

the Dutch. The towers at each side have loop-holes for rifle fire, which would command any attacking force below. The building also mounted some cannon. These have been removed to Shikarpur, a concern of the Midnapore Zamindari Company in Nadia; but one may still be seen in the police lines at Rāmpur Boālia, where it served till a few years ago as the midday gun. It has a monogram, roughly cut on the barrel, composed of the letters V. O. C. A. The first three letters must represent Vereenigde Ostindische Companie, *i.e.*, the United East India Company. I have no knowledge of Dutch to enable me to say what A stands for; possibly it represents Artillery. Another relic of the Dutch is an unmounted swivel gun, 7 feet long, which has been taken from the Bara Kothi to the bungalow of the Manager of the Midnapore Zamindari Company at Maricha in Murshidābād. Enquiry has shown that swivel guns of the same type are common in the Malay States, where they were used by the Dutch and Portuguese in their struggle for supremacy in the Far East, and afterwards by Malay pirates, who eagerly adopted such useful weapons. They were small portable cannon mounted on swivels and were generally placed in the bulwarks of junks or *prahus* to repel or assist in an attack. It is probable that this particular gun came from one of the Dutch boats that went along the river laden with silk and other valuable cargo.*

In the compound of the Bara Kothi there is a small cemetery with graves dating back to the early years of the nineteenth century. The oldest epitaph in it is to the memory of Christopher Oldfield of the Honourable Company's Civil Service, who died in 1808. Another tomb outside the cemetery walls is two years older, having been erected over the remains of Samuel Beachcroft, who died in 1806. From the old Collectorate Records, I find that in 1790 he was in the East India Company's service and Resident at Harriaul, the modern Hāriāl in Pābna close to the borders of Rājshāhi. This is the only tomb outside the cemetery: inside it there are 13 tombs with epitaphs. A simple epitaph is that on the grave of Thomas Combes, *viz.*, "Here lies an honest man." Combes was a planter who used to live at Maricha just across the Ganges in Murshidābād and, as the inscription shows, died in 1833. The most pathetic commemorates Eugene Deveria, who died in 1848 at the early age

* I am indebted for this information to Mr. R. G. Macdonell of Maricha. A photograph of the gun will be found in the *Field* of 18th January 1913.

of 15. "Sublatus ex oculis, in corde matris adest," *i. e.*, "Though removed from his mother's eyes, he still lives in her heart." His father was a French soldier under Napoleon, who came out to India and became a planter. A good story is told of him in Simson's *Sport in Eastern Bengal* (1886): "I remember when I was at Rajshye, a tiger swam to a low patch of grass near a factory superintended by a gallant old Frenchman called Deveria; he was told of the tiger and took a look at it crouching in the grass. He returned to his factory, cleaned his one single-barrelled rifle, fitted a bullet to it after much trimming with a penknife and sallied forth against the tiger, and was going to shoot it from some distance; but he thought, as he had only one chance, he had better go closer, so he walked up to about 15 yards; the tiger never moved; he shot him through the head, and the tiger lay dying. This gentleman had served under Napoleon the Great and was a remarkably cool and daring man." He was equally cool with snakes. A Russell's viper having been found in his bathroom, he seized it by the tail, whirled it round his head and struck it twice or thrice on the brick floor, completely smashing its head. Another French name found on one of the tombs is that of Perronx (1846). There is only one soldier's grave, that of Lieut. George Shairp of the 15th N. I., who died at "Rampore Beaulah" in 1838, but there is a soldier's wife buried here, *viz.*, the wife of Lieutenant-Colonel H. J. Wood, Bengal Artillery, who died in 1845. Two members of the East India Company's Civil Service were interred in the cemetery, *viz.*, Christopher Oldfield, mentioned above, and Edward Lennon Campbell (1833). Another tomb dates back to the days of the commercial monopoly of the Company. It has an epitaph to the infant daughter of Charles Walter William Cary, who died in 1826 at the Sardah Residency. The most recent epitaph dates back to 1851. There are also several tombs without tablets. These were dislodged in the earthquake of 1897 and stored in the lower floor of the Bara Kothi by the Engineer-in-Charge, who lived there. He died suddenly of cholera, and within a week after his death the slabs were stolen, and in all probability converted into curry stones.

It seems probable that there was an old Dutch cemetery here and that it has been washed away by the river with other parts of the compound. Some of the English tablets that belonged to graves that were washed away have been built into the southern wall of the little cemetery. There is also a modern cemetery to the west of the jail.

All the other buildings in the town are modern. The most conspicuous is the College building, which was erected in 1884. The Madrasa, which is in the college grounds, is a curious semi-oriental building of a bad style constructed a year earlier. Close to it is the Fuller Hostel for Muhammadan pupils of the Madrasa and Collegiate School, an architectural curiosity, which was opened in 1909 and named after Sir Bampfylde Fuller, then Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam. South of the College is an old mosque and the tomb (*dargāh*) of a Muhammadan saint named Makhdūm Shah; the adjoining quarter is hence called Dargāhpara. No one is able to give any information about Makhdum Shāh except that he was a Muhammadan saint. The jail buildings to the west occupy a very large space, being scattered over no less than 84,000 square yards. West of this again is the *maidān*, a noble expanse of green turf with the police lines in the centre. Between it and the jail are nearly all the European residences in the Government estate of Srirāmpur, which is separated from the river by the embankment.

About half a mile to the north is an agricultural farm, with an area of 63 acres, which was opened in 1904; experiments are carried on every year with different crops, notably potatoes and sugarcane, seeds are distributed, and fowls are reared. The Agricultural Department also maintains a Sericultural School in the town, and the District Board the Diamond Jubilee Industrial Institute at which training is given in surveying, carpentry and smithy work. The chief educational institutions are the Rājshāhi College (with a Sanskrit College, Madrasā and Collegiate High School attached) and a high school called the Bholānāth Academy. There is a Presbyterian Mission, which has a church on the *maidān* and maintains a small dispensary and girls' school. Another girls' school, called the P. N. Ray's Girls' school after Raja Pramatha Nath Ray of Dighapatia, is maintained with the help of grants from the Education Department and the Municipality.

The most interesting institution in Rāmpur Boāliā is the Museum of the Vārendra Research Society, which is at present located in the Public Library. The Society was only founded a few years ago, but its members have already done valuable archaeological work, and the fruits of their labours may be seen in the Museum. The sculptures range over many centuries, the earliest being rough and simple, while those of the mediæval period are delicately sculptured and richly ornamented. They furnish a signal proof of the artistic skill of

the people of Vārendra, and at the same time show unmistakably how pure Buddhism was supplanted by Tāntric Buddhism and the latter again by Tāntric Hinduism.

Rāmpur Boāliā has more than once suffered from the floods of the Ganges. It was almost completely destroyed by floods in the 'fifties of last century. Mr. Simson, writing of it a few years later, states that the destruction was terrible and none of the house she knew remained. There was again a disastrous inundation early in the sixties, when the embankment was breached and a portion of the town, including the Government offices, was swept away; the present Government offices were built in 1865 to replace the old buildings. The town is safeguarded to some extent by an embankment 7 miles long, which protects an area of 35 square miles. It is provided with sluices, which are opened in the rains. The Ganges water then rushes through the drains and nullāhs, flushing the pools and ditches and filling up the tanks.

The channels of the Padmā shift considerably. In some years the inner channel, *i.e.*, the channel leading past the town, is full of water, and steamers can put in along the river bank even during the dry season. At other times this channel is so shallow that the steamer station has to be moved as much as 7 miles down stream to the great inconvenience of the inhabitants. Nor is this the least of their troubles, for in such years the channel from which they have to get their drinking water may be a mile away from the river bank. In the rains, however, the river is brimful, and the appearance of its broad waters, surging down as far as the eye can see, may not inaptly be characterized as majestic.

Rampur Boalia Subdivision.—Headquarters subdivision of the district with an area of 849 square miles and a population of 564,224 persons. It is bounded on the north by the Naogaon subdivision, on the south by the river Padmā, on the east by the Nātor subdivision, and on the west by the district of Māldā. The land along the river Padmā is higher than the country inland and the drainage slopes away from its banks. The country further inland consists of an open plain with *bils* here and there. Those near the Padmā are comparatively small and shallow, while those to the north, *e.g.*, near Tānor and Saipārā, are of larger extent. Along the west and the north-west of the subdivision the country is all Barind and abounds in *tār* (fan-palm) trees, while the bamboos, which are a conspicuous feature of the scenery elsewhere, are comparatively few.

Sardah.—Village in the Sadar subdivision, situated on the bank of the Ganges and on the Pābnā road, 13 miles south-east of Rāmpur Boāliā and 1 mile north of Chārgḥāt, where the Baral river debouches from the Ganges. It contains the Police Training College, which is picturesquely situated close to the bank of the river and commands a superb view of a great reach of the Ganges. The buildings occupied by the college are of considerable interest, for they belonged to a Commercial Residency of the East India Company in the days when Rāj-shāhisilk was an important item in its commercial transactions. When the Company gave up its private trade in 1835, the factory was bought by Messrs. Robert Watson and Company, a firm which carried on the silk industry on a large scale. It subsequently passed into the hands of the Bengal Silk Company and then was transferred to the Midnapore Zamindari Company, from which Government purchased it for the Police Training College. The tall chimneys and long low roofs of the factory buildings still show the use to which it was put, but the whirl of the engines has given place to the sound of the bugle and the hum of barrack life.

One other memorial of the old times is a ruined graveyard under the shade of some great casuarina trees at the back of the mess-house, which was the old Residency and is still called the Barā Kothi. It contains six graves, but only two have epitaphs. One (now detached and lying loose on the top of the grave) is to the memory of Miss Elizabeth Queiros, who died in 1835. The other is a marble headstone with an inscription in French showing that it marks the grave of Octavie Le Tourneux, a little babe who died at Sardāh in 1867.

The following are the old silk factory buildings :—

(1) The Barā Kothi, which is now the mess-house of the Probationary Assistant Superintendents of Police : it is situated in a fine compound with magnificent old trees and has a spacious kitchen and servants' outhouses on a scale rarely met with in Bengal. (2) The Chhotā Kothi, a smaller building, which is the residence of the Principal. (3) The Assistants' bungalow, which provides separate quarters for the two European Drill Instructors. (4) Six factories, one measuring 300 by 55 feet, another 200 by 65 feet, and the four others 300 by 45 feet, all of which provide barrack and class-room accommodation for the cadets and constables under training. (5) The silk factory club, which is used as a library and reading-room for all ranks. (6) The factory drying-house which provides fine stables for the College horses.

Government has added the following buildings :—

(1) Four rows of quarters to accommodate (a) 8 Inspectors, (b) 15 Sub-Inspectors, (c) 10 Head Constables and (d) the clerical and hospital staff. (2) Quarters for two Deputy Superintendents. (3) A magazine for ammunition. (4) A dispensary with an up-to-date operating-room. (5) Four long rows of kitchens for the cadets and constables. There are also a double-storied hospital containing 40 beds, a house for the medical officer, and a segregation ward for infectious diseases; a house for the Assistant Principal will also be constructed shortly.

The Police Training College was opened in October 1912 and is a large institution at which training in the duties of their profession is given to probationary Assistant Superintendents (12), probationary Deputy Superintendents (2), probationary Sub-Inspectors (120) and constables (400); the number at the end of each class shows the number under training in January 1915. The budding policemen's life, while under training, is a busy one, for the day's work begins at a very early hour and is divided into seven periods, four of mental and three of physical training, besides two hours' preparation.

The probationary Assistant Superintendents of Bengal are posted at Sardāh on their arrival in India, and their course of training lasts 18 months. During this period they are sent for a three months' training in survey and settlement in one of the large district settlements, and they are also deputed to an Indian regiment during the summer recess, when they undergo regimental training. While at the College they receive instruction in their duties, study for the departmental examinations, and undergo training in drill, riding, revolver shooting, physical training, sword exercise, etc. They are instructed by the Principal or Chief Drill Instructor in the last four subjects for one to two hours daily till they are sufficiently advanced, when they are put in charge of a section of cadets. The Deputy Superintendents' course of training also lasts 18 months and is on the same lines except that they are not deputed to a regiment.

The cadets, as the probationary Sub-Inspectors are called, have also a wide curriculum, the subjects including law (with and without books), the police manual, general police methods, medical jurisprudence, first-aid, plan drawing and surveying (in all of which subjects they have to pass a written qualifying examination), besides the following practical subjects, viz., the

training and use of the powers of observation, preparation of descriptive rolls, concise report writing, classification and uses of finger impressions, drill, riding, bicycling, musketry, revolver practice and physical training.

The subject entitled "general police methods" includes *inter alia* the following subjects :—

(1) prevention of crime, (2) investigation of crime, case work, including the recording of first informations and methods of detection, (3) criminal tribes and their methods, (4) the way to give evidence with precision and accuracy, (5) the proper method of questioning witnesses, the treatment of accused persons, co-operation with village authorities and the object of thana registers, (6) use of confessions and approvers, (7) prosecution of cases, (8) conduct of the police towards the public, (9) practical work of a thana officer (other than case work), such as the care of arms, kit inspection, identification of suspects and chaukidari parade, (10) town and beat duties, (11) measures to be taken in connection with house searches, (12) the preparation of village crime note books, and (13) surveillance.

The Bengali middle classes, from which these young men are drawn, are well known to be mentally and intellectually alert. The great lessons which they learn at Sārdāh are not merely discipline, obedience and smartness of bearing, but formation of character resulting in efficiency and virility. Those who have seen them at work cannot but be struck at the transformation effected. Slack and feeble youths are converted into vigorous well-set-up young men with a good *esprit de corps*, new ideals of duty, and an enlarged outlook on life.

The recruits for the constabulary, who are trained here before being drafted to the districts, undergo drill, physical training, etc., and have to pass a verbal examination in law and procedure. If illiterate, they are taught to read and write; if on arrival they are literate in their own language, they are taught some tongue other than their own.

The training is on military lines, the cadets and constables being divided into companies of 120 to 130 men each. Each company is under a Sub-Inspector, and there is a drill havildār for each 15 men during their first two months, and a havildār for every 25 men during the remainder of the course of training. Drill is not confined to such simple matters as manual exercises and forming fours, but includes musketry, riot drill, fire drill, stretcher drill, sword exercise, mounted escort, practical sentry duties, bicycling, carriage parking and

street-lining. A brief sketch may now be given of the methods of instruction.

The different grades of probationary officers and recruits are divided into classes for lectures and instruction. For the probationary assistants there are a Law Instructor and two Bengali teachers who take them through their course, and for each of the constable classes, which consist of 40 men, there is a Sub-Inspector or Head Constable. The cadet classes, which consist of 20 to 25 men each, are taken by an Inspector, who is transferred each week from one class to another in order that each may have an equal chance and not get into any special groove.

Examinations are held each week to test the students' knowledge and progress. Before the summer recess, and also before the final examination, test examinations are held in each subject in which the men have to appear; these they must pass before they can avail themselves of the vacation allowed by Government.

The probationary Assistants appear at the half-yearly departmental examinations at Calcutta and have to pass in Bengali, Law (Higher and Lower Standards), Hindustani and Accounts. The Deputy Superintendents have to pass in the same subjects with the exception that they have only to pass in a language other than their own. In the case of the cadets, the final examination is held by a committee of officers, appointed by the Inspector-General of Police, which decides if any student has failed to qualify. If the committee give an adverse decision, he is either reverted for further training or discharged as unsuitable. The constables are discharged after six months' training, being drafted off to districts every second month. Another committee meets and decides whether they are qualified; if they fail, they are dismissed or relegated for further training.

The examination in the practical subjects for all grades takes place at the College under the direct supervision of the Principal.

The instructional staff consists of the following:—The Principal, one Chief Drill Instructor and one Chief Law Instructor for the College; six Law Inspectors for the cadets; one Law Inspector and two Sub-Inspector Pandits for the probationary Assistants; one Chief Drill Instructor and one Chief Law Instructor for the Constables' Training School; four Sub-Inspectors and six Head Constables also act as Law Instructors for the Constables' Training School; four subadars, one in charge of the drill of each company, assisted by thirty-two havildars and

the requisite establishment of buglers, drummers, armourers and orderlies. The hospital staff consists of a Military Assistant Surgeon, a Sub-Assistant Surgeon and two compounders. There is also a *salutri* in charge of the College horses. The total staff at present amounts to eighty men. There is also a subordinate establishment of menials, such as sweepers, syces, grass-cutters, gardeners, etc.

The official visitors to the college are as follows :—The Commissioner of the Rājshāhi Division, the District Magistrate of Rājshāhi, the Deputy Inspectors-General of Police for the Rājshāhi, Dacca and Presidency Ranges, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department, the Superintendent of Police of Rājshāhi, the Director of Public Instruction, the Director of Surveys, the Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals, the Civil Surgeon of Rājshāhi, the Inspector of Schools for the Dacca Division, and the Master of Method of the David Hare College, Calcutta.

When the buildings are all completed, it is proposed to appoint an Assistant Principal and to increase the number of constables under training to 600 men, and at the same time to make the necessary increase of staff. It is further proposed to establish a six months' course for all European sergeants of the police force who have not passed an examination in their duties.*

Since the opening of the College, the Principal has been Major H. Chamney, C.M.G., to whose zeal and energy its successful development is due.

Tāhirpur.—A village in the Sadar subdivision, situated 12 miles north of Puthiā on the Baralai river. It is the headquarters of the Tāhirpur Rāj and contains a District Board Inspection Bungalow, as well as a dispensary and Middle English school which are maintained by the estate. The Rājbari was damaged by the earthquake of 1897 and is far from imposing.

With the possible exception of the Dubalhāti family, the Tāhirpur Rāj family is the oldest family of distinction in the district. Its founder was a Vārendra Brāhman, named Kāmadeva Bhatta, who flourished in the beginning of the fifteenth century and appears to have carved out a small principality for himself, seizing the *pargana* of Tāhirpur from a Pathān Chief. His son, Bijay Lashkar, followed in his footsteps as a military

* I am indebted to Major Chamney for notes from which the above account has been compiled.

adventurer. The most illustrious of the line was Raja Kāns Nārāyan, who may be ascribed to the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. He also saw military service, leading a successful expedition against the Arakanese, and was quite a small potentate. His court is described by the great Bengali poet, Krittibās, who says that he undertook his famous version of the Rāmāyana at the Raja's request. The supremacy of the Raja among the Vārendra Brahmins is sufficiently apparent from the fact that he decided what was to be the social status of the three divisions of Vārendra Brāhmins, viz., Kulins, Kāps and Srotriyas. His successor, Indrajit, is said to have received a grant of 52 *parganas* from the Mughal Emperor, in return for which he was liable to provide a force of 7,000 soldiers. His successors incurred the displeasure of the Mughal Emperor and lost all but Tāhirpur. The remains of the estate were partitioned, and the son of the unfortunate Raja, who was in arrears of revenue, was thrown into prison at Dacca and died there.

The annals of the family give other instances of the vicissitudes of fortune, which show how much the Rajas were at the mercy of the caprices of their Mughal rulers. The great Kāns Nārāyan himself was a victim. "His own son," it is said, "went to Delhi, and, having obtained an order from the King, bound his father and brought him from Bengal, at which the King, being pleased, granted him 52 *parganas*." This incident is mentioned in a report on the Tāhirpur Rāj prepared by its Manager, which was sent by the Board of Revenue to the Governor-General in Council (Lord Cornwallis) in 1789.

According to the family history, Indrajit was the grandson of Kāns Nārāyan and was given a grant of 52 *parganas* in recognition of the services he rendered when Todar Mal organised the finances and revenue administration of Bengal. Surjya Nārāyan, the next of the line, incurred the anger of Prince Shāh Shujā, then Viceroy of Bengal, who demanded that Surjya Nārāyan should send his daughter to his princely harem. This the proud Brāhman indignantly refused to do, whereupon Shāh Shujā attacked him and razed his palace to the ground. Surjya Nārāyan was sent to Delhi, where he died in captivity. Orders were then issued that his sons and daughter were to be sent to the imperial court. The daughter committed suicide to save her honour. The sons fled, but the youngest, Lakshmi Nārāyan, was brought before the Nawāb of Bengal, who was so moved by his tale, that the young Raja was allowed to keep Tāhirpur *pargana*; all the other *parganas* had been confiscated.

It was this Raja who established the family residence at Tāhirpur.

The old line of Tāhirpur Rajas died out at the close of the eighteenth century, the last being Ramendra Nārāyan, whose daughter, Durgā Sundari, married Binod Rām Rāy, one of whose ancestors had married a sister of Kāns Nārāyan. From Durgā Sundari are descended the members of the present Tāhirpur family. Its head is Raja Sashi Shekhareshwar Rāy Bahādur, who succeeded in 1865, when only five years old. During his minority the estate was under the Court of Wards. He was made a Raja in 1889, was a member of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission of 1893-94, and received the personal title of Raja Bahādur in 1896; he has also been a Member of the Bengal Legislative Council. He is now living in retirement near Benares, and his eldest son, Kumār Shib Shekhareshwar Rāy, has managed the estate since 1909. The latter was born in 1887, was educated at the Central Hindu College at Benares, and took a B.A. degree at the Allahabad University. He has recently been elected a Member of the Bengal Legislative Council by the landholders of the Rājshāhi Division.

Thakur Manda.—*See Mānda (Thākur).*



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